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Australia's Monthly Magazine of the Performing Arts

MAY 1982

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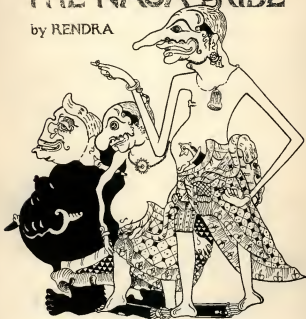
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THE STRUGGLE OF THE NAGA TRIBE

by RENDRA



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COMMENT

This month we celebrate the tenth year of the Australian National Playwrights' Conference.

The original purpose of the Conference, facilitated by Whelan Inquest, was to develop fledgling talent and provide each year a new crop of writers that the theatres might harvest.

Ten years on the boom has suffered its midlife crisis, and the Conference became a place for known writers to have their works read. Gwyneth Blundell's 1981 fortnight was stalked for this and George Whaley's present one, with names like Sandy McCatchem, Michael Forsythe, Craig Green, Bob Herbert and Lee Rabin, will not escape similar criticism.

Why are "established" writers hanging to the ANPC?

Quite simply because they cannot get a hearing elsewhere. And it pays off. Alana Gray's (and she's no greynish talent) *Peacocks* from last year's Conference was taken up by the MTC and is to be made into a film.

The theatre companies say that local content has not proportionally stuck much below the level of 1974 (30%)—though it is hardly encouraging to know that in eight years it hasn't crept up. But economically it is the saddest few whose works are produced and increasingly the local segment of the season is being consigned to second venues.

Honey proves that funding and indigenous growth go hand in hand. *The Bell* was a direct result of the funding of the Elizabeth Theatre Trust, the first channel of Government subsidy, in 1974, the last new wave of socialist writers and directors coincided with the establishment of the then named Australian Council for the Arts in 1968 and had its heyday in the Whitlam years 1972-3.

"I'm not a believer in quantity for its own sake, but it seems clear that the more we cast the net (or increase subsidy) the more likely it is that genuine creative talent will prosper and works of true value emerge." Clough Whelan

Even with the phytic victory after the Stage Crisis Day and accolades to the new Casualty supreme Tim Faneau, the speaker is on. With the Challenge Game Scheme theatre companies are sent to mind games to the market place under banner guaranteed to turn the public off: "Arm Against the Wall".

Certainly it is easy to lose faith in times of financial stricture and return to "between is best"—or at least reduce—(thinking I think

goodness we're over that, with regard to our action and direction). Many directors believe they "prove the medium" by making works of the overseas reputation. In fact they are hardly at risk when the dramas they present are the pick of what has been successful in the theatre capitals of the Western world. This is unalloyed Edgely thinking — who on his own admission is apt to make a dollar.

QTC Director Alan Edwards represents one obviously indigenous view when he says "The QTC has a policy of presenting the best of national and international writing for theatre of every period. In current percentage of Australian plays it is between 20 and 30% in the major house seasons and 100% in the shorter or wing — QTC Target Productions. As our audience grew and more good Australian plays became available this is likely to increase, but I don't adhere to anything like a fixed percentage just for its own sake." This could be termed the "greynish" attitude to local drama — when something good turns up, produce it.

Jim Shannon takes the active line, however, believing that talent must be cultivated through production. "The economic conditions of the time tend to encourage more conservative means of programming. While the quality of any script must be the priority, to avoid the responsibility of developing the writing talent in the country — a responsibility that is implicit in public subsidy — will have quite devastating long-term effects."

It is not that supply has dried up, but demand, a matter of great concern to the Australian Writers' Guild.

No one is suggesting a xenophobic moratorium on imported plays. Of course the best from overseas should be seen here, it's a question of proportion and of indigenous development. Of course it is difficult to work up often new local dramas into the effluence of theatre — but the input is essential to the development of our national drama. In times of financial stringency the challenge is tougher. Heavy responsibility is in the hands of artistic directors. If they evade it, and the decline continues, they do a great disservice to our heritage, our cultural identity and our future.

In the meantime many of our top writers will come across to turn to the ANPC just to get a hearing. Playwrights are also taking matters into their own hands with potent moves to create a Writers' Theatre to redress the balance.

JUST ANOTHER BRICK?

CAPPA has started its publicity campaign for the Challenge Grants Scheme, sending out a bag folder of publicity material to eligible companies. The chosen slogan is "Acts Against the Wall" — not quite striking that positive, optimistic note that makes public and business alike feel they're onto a good thing, lacking a winner and all that. New Moon Theatre in North Queensland claim to be dragging in the crowds in Townsville, Rockhampton and Cairns by selling themselves in the hottest shows since Broadway.

NEW SKY

Named "Downcast" May offering — Judith Anderson's *New Sky* — promises to be of particular interest. Anderson crossed the scene and made show after training at the Le Coq School and first presented it in

(see article page 11), and indeed where most theatres' programs are noticeably blurring the edges between the distinctions we used to make — like mainstream, classical, alternative etc. — Crumphorn has made a firm commitment to the darker areas. In their marriage, downstairs theatre the repertoire is all new Australian work: Anne Harvey's *Bamboozle*, Gordon Drysdale's *Scotch* and writer-in-residence Barry Dickson's *A Couple of Broken Heart Operators* are the more experimental Peter Hindle, David Manning and Jody Posen. And in St Martin's a small classic season — *Reverence* and *Long Day's Journey*.

WOMEN AND ARTS FESTIVAL

The Women and Arts Festival is to take place in October this year, it will underway in planning. A key staff — including Sue Hill, ex-Norwood Theatre Manager — is organising a film festival, Women Writers Week, music concerts, community performances and other theatre, mural painting, pageants, day-long entertainments in Hyde Park and at the Opera House, lunch hour performances, songs and dance, exhibitions, playrights festival — the list goes on and on. And not everything will be happening in Sydney — the regional co-ordinators have a multitude of plans as well.

SHOPFRONT TO CLOSE

The new theatre on the death has a First Bay's youth theatre in St George's, Shopfront. They lost their AAP funding in 1976, Theatre Board funding in 1980 and two months ago Shopfront CTSS was axed by the Federal Government with three days notice. They have a mere \$15,000 to pay off on their \$250,000 building, but unless they can raise the money by the end of May, they are due to close down.

CANBERRA FESTIVAL

Canberra Festival's drama content was up considerably this year. Subscribers went to Theatre ACT's *On Our Selection* and the Malthouse Theatre to bring in *General Macbeth* and *Smiles Away*. A great innovation was the report of short theatre troupes for the Patricia Shaw and the Wine and Food Probe — weekend, day-long, complimentary events with performers appearing at odd times and in odd places.

METCALFE AT THE NATIONAL

Edgar Metcalfe, appointed as interim Director of the National, Perth, has now been given the permanent position. As

Artistic Director of the Hole In The Wall he took that company back to viability last year, proving that he knows what appeals to Perth's theatregoers — an excellent quali-



Edgar Metcalfe

came along with those of top actor and fine director, let the head of WA's main company.

COLIN GEORGE RUMOUR...

Rumour had it that Colin George, popular success of the then SATC in Adelaide was being brought back to run the new disreputable Marian Street. It appears that enquiries were made but that he was not available. After John Mahon's sudden departure, General Manager, John Frost seems to be keeping things running smoothly with guest directors, and negotiations for the right Artistic Director continue.

RAIN STOPS PLAY

It appears there is still some doubt surrounding the opening of the Sydney City Theatre Centre — the new home for the Drama Studio, Sydney, and a new full-time classical dance school, Attitudes Dance. The building is owned by the Electricity Commission and has been promised to the SATC group in return as the roof is fixed. The move has been delayed over 18 months through the inaction of Elenor's maintain-



Judith Anderson

QTC's 1981 Tangent season. In a lightly personae and unusual show she looks at the reactions of emigrants coming to a new land — a new sky.

THE ADMIRABLE CRUMPHORN

Ree Crumphorn feels that he's really put his stamp on Playbox' Season 2 this year.



SCTC's empty building.

ance program, forcing the two schools into a desperate campaign and the closure of the interim Dance Course. Bloom's explanation over the phone after 12 months of waiting was "Rome wasn't built in a day you know".

Meanwhile the space remains empty collecting more water and no rent.

SUCCESSFUL CELEBRITY NIGHT

Liana and Kim Barker shone on the dance floor of Radio Town Hall, Katharine Brooker and Debbie Maiba managed a sultry duet, others were less spectacular but no less enthusiastic as they filled the dance floor at the recent Playwrights' Conference Celebrity Ball. Graeme Blundell shouted over the crowd as he tried to explain what a celebrity was. Bob Ellis was forced to retire temporarily from speech-making (see his column p 8) and even Germaine Turner and John O'May had difficulty making their songs heard.

Around the candlelight, flowers, champagne and balloons, people were too intent on enjoying themselves to want any other entertainment. But where, one asked, were the ballroom dancing experts of yesteryear — ex-ANPC dancers, Richard Wherret and Audrey Melloy, to name but two. These star dust musicals will be delighted to know that their partying on till the early hours produced a profit of well over \$2,000 for the ANPC.

AS THEY LIKE HER

The MTC has thrown its banner over the windmill in a most understated fashion. John Sumner gave the task of designing the costumes for *As You Like It*, one of its major productions of the season, to Judith Cobb, who turned 21 only in February and has

come to the company straight from finishing her fashion design diploma course at RMIT. Not only that but, because the powers that be at MTC were so impressed with Judith's work and her potential, the recently formed MTC Society's cheque to the company has gone, in part, to provide a \$5,000 scholarship for Judith so she can spend this year at least with them.

PERFORMANCE SPACE

Mike Malkin, and his committee of the Performance Space, having been turned down for funding by the NSW Government, are attempting to go it alone. A fund-raising drive is underway, though looking for donations from theatres as they are may be a little over-optimistic. The actual venue is also in question, the Cleveland Street cinema are now asking for a higher rent than the committee is prepared to pay, but

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Gillian Jones in the *Lighthouse Dream*

Mullins is convinced that a cliff for the theatre profession isn't cheap good food and wine will eventually be a joke.

LIGHTS UP AT LIGHTHOUSE

Inset on the cover is Gillian Jones as Jim Shawman's Titania in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at Lighthouse — it's Shawman's first production as Artistic Director. *The Dream* is followed by Norreri's latest work, *Spillblood*, his first full-length play set in contemporary Australia. He says his decision to write it was not a conscious one but one that naturally grew out of his other plays and his fascination with how important love is to us all and the fear of loneliness.

Spillblood is a play about people who are spellbound by their fear of opening up to each other, of how unconsciously cruel they can be and of how desperate they can be for

love or as one character puts it: "The sad thing is that everyone wants to be loved." No one really listens to the other person. Sylvia's question "Don't you hear the rapping in your ears?" goes unanswered."

Sylvia is played by Gillian Jones.

ST MARTINS OPENS

This month the new performance space opens in the St Martins Youth Arts Centre. This major performing arts complex in South Yarra, dedicated to the work of young people, is unique in Australia — indeed anywhere outside the Soviet Union. St Martins involves young people by doing, there are no formal classes, but through intense involvement in show production anyone between 12 and 25 can take the opportunity to learn the craft in all areas of the performing arts. The two opening shows are *Brutaland* — *The Minimal*, directed by Helmut Bakula and *Silve of the Service* by young writer Bill Marshall.



Shaun Gorton directing *Silve of the Service*

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The Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust is putting on a bold face about the halving of its Australia Council funding from \$288,000 to \$134,000 (February 74) and affecting to be cockaloop about an extra \$80,000 earmarked for Australian content.

It is obvious, however, that much entrepreneurial planning has gone down the drain. For example, those much talked about musicals, instead, the Trust is constrained to spread their \$80,000 thinly around. In effect, doing more or less exactly what the Council's Theatre and Music Boards themselves are doing.

Projects currently being negotiated include financial involvement in the Queensland Ballet's tour of Canberra, Albany, Melbourne and Geelong, Sydney seasons for Circus Oz and the circus, *Squarrry*, the Marionette Theatre's production of *The Magic Pudding* at the Commonwealth Games in Brisbane in September.

The Trust lost money on the visits by Pirella Göttsche di Milan and Pina Bausch's Wuppertal Dance Theatre, as it quite rightly expected to do, because providing Australians with an opportunity to see companies of this stature is all part of its job. It is hoping to recoup some of these losses by doing sufficiently well with its other 1982 activities — the Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet, *Barmen* and *Sesame Street Live*.

It is striving, so far without success, to raise special funding of \$70,000 to send the Australian Aboriginal Theatre's production of Robert Merritt's play, *The Cadmean*, to the World Festival of Theatre in

Denver, Colorado, in July — the first time this festival has invited participation by an Australian play.

On another tack, I find it shocking that a national institution like the Trust, apparently without protest, has been lumped with every other subsidised theatrical organisation as a possible claimant for a challenge grant.

To qualify for an extra \$20,000, it must raise, in competition with every other struggling organisation, \$60,000 either from corporate sponsors or through social activities by and for its members. To me, this seems both humiliating and shameful.

To more positive matters, I hear entrepreneur Clifford Hocking plans to bring to Sydney early next year American actress Esselle Parsons and the one-woman show she staged at this year's Perth Festival, *Miss Marguerite's Way*.

For a moment at time it appeared Sydney was about to be offered simultaneous productions of a new Neil Simon play, *God's Favorite* — one professional, one amateur.

On a recent product-buying flying visit to New York and London, Artistic Director Peter Williams and Executive Producer Garry Penny secured the author's own play for a Peter Williams Productions presentation at Phillip St Theatre.

Not surprisingly, perhaps, they were unaware at the time that the Genesis Theatre had earlier lined the play as one of its six productions for 1982, even giving the opening date as July 31 and

the director as Charles Zarr.

It transpired, however, that the enterprising Genesis had been over-optimistic in thinking they could get the amateur rights. That they were unable to do so is understandable. Simon, I'm told, was most unwilling even to assign the professional rights



Hopefully a Sydney season for Circus Oz. Photo: Punch Photos.

Something to do with continuing dissatisfaction with the second act Williams and Penny had to do some very persuasive talking to get the okay.

God's Favorite is now being planned for a mid-June opening at Phillip St Theatre. Meanwhile, the Genesis are hoping to substitute another Simon play, *The Star-Spangled Girl*, which has already had at least two stagings in Sydney, including Frank Hahn's Opus Theatre Group production at the Independent Theatre in 1976.

The Q Theatre, which since it has been headquartered in Penrith (NSW) has had notable success with two original Australian musicals — *St. Mary's Kid* in 1977 and *Paradise Regained* in 1980 — is launching another this month, *Safety In Numbers*, by Phillip Scott and Luke Hardy.

The cast of four in Mariette Raps, the original alternative lead to Jennifer Murphy in *Evie's*, Robyn Arthur, who was also in *Evie's* and recently in *Bushy Wick Brel* at the Nimrod Downstairs, Frank Garfield, who was in the musical *Cafe* at Marion St

continued on page 13.



Barmen — the Trust's hope for recouping losses.

SPEECH FOR A BALL

This is the speech I spent three days writing and finally didn't give for reasons of convenience and economy and the terrible fate of Cicero Blundell whose ten good introductory jokes fell flat among an audience that couldn't hear them, at the Canberra Ball in aid of the Playwrights' Conference

I am brought before you fearless and facile by wills stronger than my own, in my very first untried words (wops, all criminal wops) and miserably clashing brown suede shoes, as before a tame economic in the company of the rich, and Amazon on my shivered gums, and Garcia 2000 on my pubic hairs and hope in my heart, in that last gap of my twentieth year to hauser or ... lumbo, that some young person, like of both and sweet of glance, from Brisbane perhaps, or further north, will not have heard the last before, long copyrighted by the great Guy Delema since 1949 "And you must play the Mason pinot!" and still believe I yet have influence in a cocaine-fuelled and accountant-fuelled film industry that has passed me by.

All around me are the members of our colonised Maasai, grung blissfully in to the Romans, and coming down off the Rock alive, whined and sick, saying Roma in the gutter, a wire we cannot cross, its values must be our values and so gods our gods, there is no final ... and the temple is down.

So ... most pit wessies, slash hit Butch Cassidy, regressive Samson, and Kirk Douglas' sagging dimple twice over and the given instant index of the Salzbush Agonistic dream through my nightmares in Delbyrmond Robert and Rupert, Adams and Pucker, Gyngill and Stramen, Galfand and Winters, Engoff and Dewey, ... more jobs and work jobs and hand jobs and blow jobs and talk jobs and can jobs ... beyond all human imagination, coffins in Modjesco with friends, ... five hundred thousand dollars, ... three hundred free runs at that performance kind it so much they scraped over till the end.

Listen mate, why have six American actors playing the six American roles in your next Australian movie, when following the precedent of Kirk Douglas, those six American roles could be played by only three — which is known as creative accounting — and the still astounding world-smoulding miracle of Murdoch and Engwood type (see Galfand and dei) you'll be so glad you did.

Robert and Rupert broke up, I hear

These Adelaide Festival relationships were transitory. Something to do with how Murdoch's father made his journalistic reputation by telling the truth about Galfand, a mistake he would not have made last year, had he been, like most of England and Australia, in the puppy of his son. The wind blows where it lists however, and my wet finger is always in it, and I am writing a Galfand-style road movie myself, to be called *Phaser Theory*, in which the central teenage character is on the verge of being selected for the Australian test cricket side when he suddenly decides to go to Vietnam, meeting north with a marvellous smoking draft-dodger via Byron Bay and Sarfere Paradise in Camarage. They arrive in Vietnam and find in their environment that killing is going on. Music is by Sharbert and Mozart. It should make a lot of money.

So too, I fear also, in the wake of his triumph with *The Man from Snowy River*, should Cal Collier's forthcoming screenplay to be directed again by Mad Miles II, as Evan Williams has come to know him, and to costar once more the great Jack Thompson, or Jack Clayton as his barman

has come to know him, called *Clancy*, of the Overhills, and based on the life of Michael Ridgely, in which five hundred battle-hardened men accompanied Gallop over North Head in an act of mass suicide, crying "If you can't trust Malcolm Fraser when can you trust?" It ends with a glorious crimson sunset over Los Angeles and the angel here's sublimated profile looking out, and Robert Lawrence's moving voice-over, the valentynary words —

Sometimes I wonder fancy that I'd like to change with Clancy

In my velvet helicopter with a starry going down.

And the videotape a-chatter of the buses on state that matter.

In the conference rooms of Utah where they cry you little beast!

Another Aussie wrote-off in the best of Dolly's sound.

Phil Noyce, I am pleased to say, has interrupted only briefly with *Reagan's* his chosen career of giving interviews, a mistake I think he will not make again, though rumours are about, there are always rumours in the film business, of a woged he will be called *Strawpik*, subtitled *John's Poets*, a tale of squab urban corruption in freezing Melbourne weather when the once idealistic film crew of the Melbourne Age is bought off by a businessman, consummation Penny might producer and agent with tell-tale flaws in her *Sinners* escape and far too much to love. The final words in the controversial review, "the best Australian film since *Poems at Mangan Arch*," have alerted the usually combative Jim McIlroy to the possibility of revising the earlier film with a new expanded ending, as originally conceived by the covering genius of Peter Weir, in which the little girls in crinolines, aboard a flying saucer, float upwards, over upwards to the music of a thousand films.

Peter Weir himself, now in the fourteenth month of the preliminary shoot of *The Year of Living Dangerously*, based he assumes on, on his own original novel, has this week fired his third consecutive film crew for interfering with his plans for world domination and yesterday blocked himself on an island besieged by the troops of President Marcos, who in his emergency broadcast and the Philippines could only stand one disaster at a time, and has based himself by reversing the role of the central character, dwarf to suit the needs of John Travolta. Thus, the first Australian film to get total American backing and a total American cast, has caused the busy redefinition of the word *Australian* with the meaning of the act, by a parkanometry task force working day and night, as anyone who can watch half an hour, and without preannouncing, point out the relevant contrast on a map of the world.

Elsewhere Tim Burstall, quickly adopting his approach as he always does to the needs

of the last movie-going generation but one, in himself reworking, to his intense delight, his three postponed feature film *Kangaroo* in the novel of which, when he finally got round to reading it last week, he was amazed to find no sexual content whatever, uses a more populist version of the same story, called *Carry On D & H*, and is hoping to interest Ponder Howard in the role of the bawdy, daring, prurient novelist from the north, with Pam Ayres as his naïf, gawdy, foreign-accented wife.

Still there are some glimmers of hope for the country. Peter Allen has won an actual Academy Award for a song written by them: other people — to which I understand he contributed the A flat — and an enjoying the award pulled out to the vast television world audience "Hello Australia" and nearly got the pressacious right: Australian achievement, after years of search, have found the farthest point in the universe — the one at which an Australian film goes into space at Village Roadshow. And Nancy Reagan has shyly confessed that her very favourite actor of all is Bryan Brown, though I would have thought that her taste in men was already perfectly obvious, in her choice for husband of the only unstarred actor in the world. He has curiously given the producers a bad name. He knows his lines but not the sense of them. I quote from *Private Eye*.

President "Rockstar" Reagan today angrily let out in his Defense Chief Caspar Humberger over US plans to drop an B-50 on Raupis as a demonstration of goodwill to the Soviet Union. "It has never been part of official US policy to make a first strike against our NATO allies," he said in a Todd Strickland-style statement of disclaimers, "but that doesn't mean we wouldn't do it if we had to." Later, however, Secretary of State Earl Reg, III, the extreme World War One commander, clarified the new frontier by saying that "the bomb would only be dropped on Europe in case of emergency — or a case of whys, as the case may be." There is some confusion here tonight as to just when the US is planning to go to war with One thing is certain. The war process must go on.

That man from his attitude might count as Australian concern, so self-destructively obsequious, as he to the muzzed poets around and beneath him, when he didn't have to be.

But Australian concern is more than that, and the country's one true living secret, John Larmond, who made *Pacific Ranges*, is teeling with his new feature film to shift up market his previously somewhat bohemian image by making a long list in art film, his with his tale for the rest, I think, on the best. It's a soft porn allegory of the Australian film industry, set as the pink and lanky, black-skin and long-breasted, retrieval of the AFC, starring Mark Lee as Peter Weir, and Mike Preston as Tim

Burstall, and Sir Lay Patterson as Michael Thornhill, called Willie Wankie and the Chocolate Factory. In the great man's message, so well articulated in this wonderful burn-brosched gospel, too much chocolate can send you blind.

It is difficult I know in theatre, more so, more severe, more casual, less prone to ruling ideas and only a trifle more expensive, but it has its little demons too.

The death of *Playe* and *Playe* has been a dreadful loss to the heads of Australia's theatres. Without an actual hint they are now obliged to duplicate one another's productions instead of Peter Hall's and their standards are consequently slipping and desperate measures are called for, like even revisiting London, and therefore from Cockney relatives. One solution has been the wholesale importation and installation in the Sydney Hilton with stages of champagne and canes of starrng left-wing British playwrights, and harking banners across through the milk hatch on the hour. Our small joking reference to Barry and Beano at the box will then suffer as Australian concern in the subsequent work of genius, popularized by actors of every colour and creed flows in first class from every terrace, and the leading Australian newspaper, flattered by the attention, boots the bill.

Too much chocolate can send you blind, a message that, in Empire terms, we should murmur like a leany. As we stand, tonight, near to the grave of our national identity, and the onslaught designed by those great Australian: Strickland and Roadshow, Bloch and Wardech, of all that we were and could have been, the message, long repeated of the Tower of Babel, the erection of a man named Nimrod, should not be lost on us. Soon the lightning will come that breaks confusion and the tower will be down. Jerusalem is not needed, or should I say Mecca in this august company, by acts of greed, as a Reagan and Thatcher and Fraser are daily fading out, or acts of grouping dictatorship as John Sarwan and Lucian Kruizer and Peter Weir may never know, but by the massed fire signboard cohesion of something like the Playwrights' Conference where, in poverty, and promiscuity, and coarseness, and underachievement, and last, and hardest help, the tale of man's thought, and scope, and compasses is added to, over so tightly, year after year. To them that have not been I say go, for I would not run it for the world, though I am open to offers beginning at this sum, and from those that will not go this year or next I urge further discounts, as kind as well as cash if you are so minded, for they keep worse hours than you and do go lonely, and to you I also commend their example of excellence under pressure in a blind and dying world.

I thank you

Bob Ellis

TAKING MELBOURNE TO HEART

By Kate Legge

For the past six months director REX CRAMPHORN has been whizzing from Melbourne to Sydney and back again winding up business in both states. Although he wore the strung out signs of travelling very well, now when he talks about the future he sounds sure of his direction. If "Home is where the heart is", then Melbourne is where it's all happening for him.

He is looking for rooms to rent close to the Playbox theatre, where he spends most of his time. Something has clicked — he has caught up with the city — its playwrights, performers, and its pace.

Things don't change overnight, but at least he can see his contribution to the Playbox's 1982 program beginning to take shape. "When we got the brochures printed for the second half of the year it was great, because they expressed a bit of my input into the Playbox," he said.

The inflexible downstairs proscenium stage has finally been tinkered with as Rex's direction to create a different space. "By cutting off the ends of the upstairs balcony we can extend the stage right across to the wall. The feel of the theatre has changed."

Management have welcomed the new initiative. It is one of many preparations for the theatre's next major project — *A Whip Round for Percy Grainger* — nicely timed to coincide with celebrations to commemorate the composer's centenary.

Since rehearsals began Rex and his cast of five have been caking in on the excitement and activity centred around the Percy Grainger Museum, where the playwright Dr Therese Rade works.

Although the play was written as

document Grainger's life in dramatic form, Rex hopes that the production will leave audiences with an impression of the man, and not just an encyclopaedic picture of his life.

To start with, he has discarded the idea of having one actor play the part of Percy. "All five actors are presenting different aspects of Percy. He is a very complicated character. It is not enough to have him recreate events." According to Rex, Dr Rade is happy with the way they are adapting her script to suit the style of an ensemble performance.

She fiddled with these drafts before passing on the final product. "Now she is busy with the centenary," he said, "she wants so to play around with it."

The people he has assembled steadily warmed to this relaxed approach. There is a feeling about the project that inspires Rex to speak enthusiastically about about its prospects. He has just returned from Sydney where he worked with Kate Fitzpatrick and Malcolm Robertson on a Restoration comedy called *The Provost's Wife*. "It didn't have the same atmosphere about



it. I usually love that kind of theatre but for some strange reason there was an uncomfortable feeling lurking that has not followed me back here."

Partly this is because of the aura surrounding the subject of Granger. "The whole thing is rapt in a sense of paranoia. Suddenly the mystery is being unravelled. It was a searchlight has swept through the Museum that has been bathed in obscurity for decades."

As well as choosing to portray Percy as a five dimensional character, Rex's aversion to theatrical biographies discouraged him from using a pianist to play Granger's music live. "It would be almost impossible to get anyone who could play like Percy, anyway. He was fantastically aggressive, even when he played conventional music like 'Country Garden'. He took an assault course on the keys." Instead the musician, Barry Cunningham has arranged tapes of original Granger recordings, plus electronic processing to interpret Percy's idea of free music.

Rex likens the sound to that of Brian Eno's music. He believes the play will also challenge the cliché that Granger was "an undiscovered genius". "Many people think he has left a huge body of work waiting to be found. That is just not true."

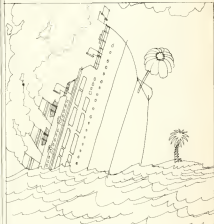
A Whip Round for Peter Granger opens this month, when Rex is looking forward to a break before starting work on his next two projects. One is a Barry Dickins' play called *A Couple of Broken Hearts*, which is about two hippies who get stuck in Vain. "It's more like a horror film than a play."

Later on in the year Rex will direct *Bonissimo* for the second time. He wants another chance to work on the translation he completed for a production in Sydney. It will be staged in St Martin's new experimental theatre as part of the Playbox's exchange program.

"It's been terrific joining the Playbox," he said. "It has the unique advantage of being younger and fresher and more energetic than the larger organisations in town. There is a good feeling here."

It seems to have caught on. Instead of rushing back to Sydney in between shows, Rex has definitely decided to stay. "Before whenever I've had a break I've gone back. But this time I want to stay and really get to know this place."

FLOATING WORLD IN DOCK



by Garrie Hutchinson

John Romeril's play *The Floating World* was first performed at the Pram Factory by the Australian Performing Group in August 1974. About 1,000 people attended the 10 performances, hardly any, but a goodish crowd by the standards of the day.

It was directed by Lindsay Smith, and had memorable performers from Bruce Spence as Les, on the Cherry Blossom nightmare to Japan and his own head, and from Peter Cummins as the deranged comic.

Peter Carrigan's writing was one of

the best, clearest uses of the Pram Factory of that time, managing to contain both the actors and the audience inside an environment which was the cruise ship, a concentration camp and Les's concentration-mind all at the same time.

Now, eight years later, *The Floating World* is being revived at Russell Street by the Melbourne Theatre Company — an unusual but welcome event in Melbourne's theatrical life.

Australian plays are still not that frequently done — but a revival!

It is an opportunity for a much larger

audience to see what has been to many an unseen masterpiece.

It is directed, in another uncharacteristic, but also very welcome move, by APG/Hoopla/Playbox person Graeme Blundell, and designed for the proscenium this time, by Peter Corrigan.

The casting reflects the compulsory changes that have occurred in the Melbourne theatre with the rapid decline in working opportunities. The schemes of old have become an absence of alternatives now. Perhaps that's a good thing, because Blundell has been able to overcome a problem in the original production — the lack of faith needed to appreciate a young actor playing old Les.

Now we have the more appropriately vintage Fred Parlow as Les, Marion Edward as Irene, Syd Cambere and Brian James, distinguished performers all, and in a nice expression of the new deal, former APG great Evelyn Krape, rocker and theatre musician Rod Symons and magician Doug Tirmolen from the burgeoning theatre restaurant talent school.

Blundell aims to develop the realistic side of the play as much as the expressionistic, emphasising its basis, Les's basis as a 'real' person, a 'real' Melbourne person. With Romeril, he wants to give it its chance as a kind of Australian *Death of a Salesman*, with Les as a characteristic kind of Australian man, perhaps better able to be understood in 1982, than he was in 1974, or than his precursor was in *The One Day of the Year*.

Romeril and Blundell view the play as a "clash between Japanese culture at its highest and Australian culture at its lowest", the possession of Les. Romeril like Shepard, Hare and other living writers, says that tragedy is possible in working class characters, that it means something, objectively, to a contemporary audience, and that it does not require the slavish acceptance of the debased "naturalistic" form.

We can see all this in a kaleidoscope of quick changes, a luna park on water, a side-show commented on visually by Peter Corrigan, in the performances of actors who can sing, dance and do magic as well as act.

It's to be hoped this production really works. If *The Floating World* sinks, then so do a raft of other modern Aussie classics.



SCENE 5
INTERIOR, PORTLAND WHARF,
MELBOURNE
DESIGNED BY PETER CORRIGAN

Peter Corrigan's original design for the APG production of *The Floating World*.

...continued from page 7

Theatre and more recently in straight roles in *The Dresser* and *Chinatown* and, making his musical debut, *Simon Barker*, of TV's *Razors Edge*, the *Nimrod*'s controversial *The Choir* and three movies, including *The Devil's Playground*.

Direction is by Arthur Dicks, who staged the company's highly successful *Primates on Parade*, and musical direction by composer Philip Scott who was musical director of *The Rocky Horror Show* and a long list of musical shows at Marston St and elsewhere.

During John Milson's brief spell as Artistic Director in succession to Alastair Duncan at Marston St Theatre, he postulated introduction of a series of non-subscription "tongue" productions of new or unusual material aimed at catering for as wide a range of tastes as possible.

The board and Theatre Manager, John Frost are persevering with that idea, though not necessarily with the same type of material Milson had in mind. First experimental offering is a late night show from May 7 at 11 pm on Fridays and Saturdays with Myra de

Groot and her Musical Director, Garce Campbell, in *Noel and Cole*, a one-hour post-graduate of the words and music of Noel Coward and Cole Porter.

As I write, the theatre is still seeking a new resident director, but in the meantime Alastair Duncan's predecessor as Artistic Director, Peter Collingwood, will stage Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*, which Milson was to have directed. Opening June 11, it has Patricia Kennedy as Lady Bracknell and Barbara Wyndon as Miss Prism.

A new board seems to be facing upcoming members of acting fraternity. A youngish Sydney actor with a good track record told me he is having extreme difficulty getting registered with a reliable agent. As each to which he had so far applied he had been told their books were closed. Must be a lesson in that somewhere.

Broadway's smash-hit revival of *The Pirates of Penzance* opens at London's Drury Lane Theatre May 26 with expatriate Aussie Pamela Stephenson joining Tim Curry, George Cole and Annie Ross in leading roles and Wilfred Lanch

reporting his New York staging. A local version with Pamela starring looks a good bet for an amprocentennial gamble. One thing it might do is eradicate the bad taste left in the mouth by last year's disastrous visit of the decaying D'Oyly Carte Opera. Incidentally, that company, though now defunct, has a stake in the new London production.



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PLAYWRITING

'82

Edited by John McCallum

Why are so many people claiming to feel disappointment with Australian playwriting now? This magazine itself said last month that "the erstwhile Jack Hibberd sensation in 1979 has become a deepening depression". On the face of it this claim seems absurd: we have a generation of mature, subtle playwrights who have been developing their craft over 15 years of theatrical ferment, we have older, well established writers, such as Patrick White and Ray Lawler, returning with new plays, and we have a wide group of new, younger writers exploring a range of subjects in a range of styles unheard of before. Only a year ago in the Australian Playwrights' issue, we welcomed the establishment of a national dramatic culture which was "sudden, brilliant and permanent" and we listed over 30 good playwrights to prove it. So what's the problem?

Part of it is that writers seem to have lost touch with their audiences. Many of them are pursuing strange, distant subjects in difficult new forms — exciting for enthusiasts and cognoscenti but bewildering for even the theatre-going public. Drama, supposedly the most communal of art forms, is becoming esoteric. As a backlash we are getting a string of entertaining, light nostalgia pieces — which at least can tap some sort of community memory. With the old feeling of social and community importance lost, audiences are fracturing into in-groups and cliques of supporters — but without the general loyalty to the genre which communal sports inspire.

David Hare said in Adelaide that the difference between English and Australian audiences' reactions to plays was that the English are poor and unhappy and they turn to their

playwrights to find out why, whereas Australians are relatively contented and they turn to their playwrights, if at all, for an entertaining night out with the office. (At least, that is more or less what he said.) Are Australian playwrights happy with this role? Do they mind that their audiences' main reason for being there is that it is the building's name on their subscription ticket? Can the writers do nothing about it? Is their choice really one between sentimental box-office pup and obscure in-group experimentation?

We don't know. In this issue we devote our annual Australian Playwriting Issue to an attempt to discover a national repertoire of Best Plays. We look at playscript publishers, in an attempt to suggest where an enduring repertoire may be begun. And we look at some recent writing in an attempt to discover the value in it.

THE BEST AUSTRALIAN PLAYS

For over 10 years people have been asking why there is no national repertoire of Australian plays — "classics" which are regular parts of the main companies seasons. (The Sydney Theatre Company planned, but seems to have abandoned such a repertoire.) The answer lies largely, no doubt, in the obscure regions of theatrical programming politics, but in case the problem is that people are nervous about deciding which plays should be part of the repertoire we present our selections for the core of it. Some are included because they were popular, some because they won serious critical acclaim. They are arranged in chronological order.

ON OUR SELECTION (1912) by Steele Rudd and Bert Bailey

The spokesman of Australian melodrama, it manages to combine in one play the conventionalities of melodramatic plot and characters, the rough sentimentality of the Australian bush legend, and the homely, small-family wisdom and comic gentleness of the original Steele Rudd stories. Partly because of the leading influence of Bert Bailey, part author and creator of the role of Bud, it played on and off for 17 years, before being taken up in a string of movies, radio serials and TV series. A new adaptation has been done by George Whaley.

DAD: *For years I've faced and fought the fires, the floods and the draughts of this country, I came here and cut a hole in the bush, where I hadn't enough money to*



Kerry Walker, Naomi MacLachlan and Geoffrey Rush in the June Street/National revival of *On Our Selection*.

buy a hilly can, without a shirt to put on my back. I worked hard and honestly, living on dry bread, harvesting me but a' wheat as with the bramble, but I never lost heart for our single seasons. Me cattle would perish and die before me very eyes and me roof go from over me head with the wind. But my spirit was never broken, and do you think you can break a man, by the Lord no (sings) Take me lots of things, take me few head of cattle and get out (Turns up C.)

CAREY: *You talk about spirit, the drought has got your crops, I've got your stock, were what can you do?*

DAD: *(Coming C.) If but the men of this country, with health, strength, and determination are always doing I can start again.*

THE DROVERS (1920) by Louis Esson

In the early 20th Century the land came

to be seen as an alien creative force, and for 30 years people wrote plays set in death-like huts with gloomy inhabitants fighting losing battles against droughts, floods and bushfires. *The Drovers*, in spite of some awkwardness in the dialogue, is the best of the genre — partly because it dares to move out of the huts and set its scene in the middle of the dry open plains. Braglaw Bill is injured in a stampede, and must be left by his mates to die — the cattle have to move on.

BRIGLOW: *It don't matter. It had to come sooner or later. I've lived my life, carefree and free, looking after me stock when I was at it, and splashing my champagne like a good one when I struck mylucky. I've lived hard, driving and horse-breaking, station work, and over-landed, the hard life of the bush, but there's nothing better, and death's come quick, before I've played out — it's the*

way I wanted.

BOSS: *Maybe I'll finish like you, Brighten, out in a bush, I hope so anyway.*

BRIGHTON: *I've got no family to leave behind. Maybe she bush'll suit me a bit, ... the tracks I've travelled, and a star or two, and the old reds.*

BOSS: *And I'll suit you. I've never travelled with a better man.*

SUMMER OF THE 17TH DOLL (1955)

by Ray Lawler

The only Australian play many people have ever heard of. It took a bob each way on the bush legend: exploiting its sentimental power to the full and then sadly, but affectionately, revealing its hollowness. The cane-cutter, Ross and Barney, come south to Melbourne for the off-season, and discover that, by 1955, the new urban Australia has taken over. Only Olive holds out for the old dream. When the play first toured the outback people who had never seen a play swam flooded rivers and drove hundreds of miles to see it. Its emotional hold over Australian audiences is so complete that few people noticed that it never really touches the issues the characters keep fighting about. It is our classic drama of the matriarchate.

ROSS: *(grabbing her wrist and holding them tight) Olive, it's gone — can't you understand? Every last little scrap of it — gone!*

(He throws her away from him, and she falls to the floor, gasp-stricken, almost as animal in her sense of loss)

OLIVE: *I won't let you. I'll kill you first!*

ROSS: *(backing at her, hating himself at*



Ray Lawler (created) in *Summer of the 17th Doll* with (from l.) Kenneth Warren, June Jago, Midge Ryan and Ethel Gabriel.

the same time) Kill me, then. But there's no more flyin' down out of the sun — no more eagles. (Going down on one knee beside her and striking the floor with his hand) This is the dirt we're in and we're gonna walk through it like everyone else for the rest of our lives!

A CHEERY SOUL (1963)

by Patrick White

The awful goodness and terrifying cheerfulness of Miss Docker in this play make her one of the most imposing characters in Australian drama. The play is important, too, because it allows an style to change to suit its developing subject. It begins fairly naturalistically, but as Miss Docker's character assumes first divine proportions, then cosmic significance, the style becomes increasingly expressionistic, the

whisperings of the chorus of old ladies and townspeople more insistent and the heightened language stronger.

THE LEGEND OF KING O'MALLEY (1970)

by Michael Boddy and Bob Ellis

Included more for what it represents than for its great merit. It was the first popular play to take the crude larrikinism of the Australian made ball and apply it to a serious contemporary political issue (which said a lot about serious contemporary politics). It took a bigoted, self-interested, bible-bashing, American head-on and, by making him the hero, implied much about his earnest, home-grown, Australian colleagues. It draws

BEST WISHES TO THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL THEATRE BOARD

The Theatre Board of the Australia Council, a statutory body of the Commonwealth Government, is pleased to continue its financial support of the Australian National Playwrights Conference (\$20,500 in 1962 plus a challenge grant of \$1,000), a support it has maintained since 1974. This support underlines the importance the Board attaches to the development of Australian playwrights which it considers to be one of its most important priorities.



Jessica Lee Paterson, Jeanne Bryson, and Sean Scully in *Milk and Honey*. Photo: Robert McFarlane.

cynically on every cheap, remixed, melodramatic, comic trick in the book and worn through, like the traditional Aussie bantler, on sheer high spirits alone.

KING: Good-bye, Billy Hughes.
(HUGUES exit)

He's a fool — Australia's bigger than that —

ANGEL: Your Australia doesn't exist, O'Malley.

DON'S PARTY (1971)

by David Williamson

Even with a message like that ringing in our ears, the search for the Real Australia continued. *Don's Party* was an alarmingly prophetic play. Hilariously chronicling the tired disillusionment of the new professional classes who finally voted Whitlam into power, it also emotionally fac-

shadowed the failure of spirit and nerve which led them to vote him out three years later. Its loosely naturalistic comic dialogue established David Williamson as a master of observation and of the theatrical craftsmanship needed to get it down and get it right.

MAL: They were great days.

DON: Great days.

KATH: Oh . . . they were great days . . . great bloody days weren't they. Then why the hell did I have to put you on an unshed's diet because you had skirts at the age of twenty-five because you couldn't fucking well cope with your job or anything else for that matter and why did I have to cook all your meals and wash all your clothes? Eh? Because your little money judge told you that there's a fucking great world full of people out there who don't give a stuff about little Donnie Henderson, hey wonder pre-

maturely retired. *White and Adolescence* games, full grown boob out. *Power Squab*.

A STRETCH OF THE IMAGINATION (1972)

by Jack Hibberd

Critically rather than popularly acclaimed, this one. It is a philosophical, scatological, myth-making, comic monologue which establishes lonely Monk O'Neill of One Tree Hill, if not as a great Australian archetype, then at least as the most comprehensive mixture of great Australian stereotypes. The language is more clever than funny, but it is gloriously brilliant in its mixture of the vulgar, the erudite and the poetic. The play is not so much Australian as about Australianness. It has the inimitable optimism of many plays about death, and the defiant reverence so essential to the bare defensiveness of the Australian psyche.

MONK: Reminds me of the time Les Darcy and I sailed Mount Kosciuszko. Les was in training as the time for his first clash with the other fine exponents of the leather, Jax Smith. There we stood on the summit, gazing across our fair land . . . Australia . . . attired only in heavy tracks and slash hats . . . our bare feet comingling with the soft skin snow. Young Les, somewhat overcome by the grandeur of the khaki expanse before him, murmured to me a vision of the future Monk, he said, one day Australia, that great nation out there of soldiers and sports and athletes, cereals and wool, will one day rule the Pacific. I believe that England will one day lack the elastic of our boots. America will extend to us an equal hand. The Indian and Kumbaka too

PLAYWRIGHTS' CONFERENCE 1982

LITERATURE BOARD

The Literature Board of the Australia Council is proud to help our playwrights by direct writing grants; by funding the publication of their plays; by subsidising the Australian Writers Guild; by regularly offering grants (\$4,000 this year) to the Playwrights Conference; by sponsoring workshops and competitions for aspiring playwrights; by bringing overseas dramaturgs and playwrights on visits to Australia; and by supporting (with the Theatre Board) a playwrights-in-residence scheme.

will continue. *Das Meer, O'Neill, has a poem — the poem of the future. With water and work it will breed and grow and spread into an empire of fair play and health and wealth and power, and wealth and literature.*

He had tears in his eyes.

I took him by the shoulders.

Get it out Les. You cannot extract sadness from cucumber. The lack of oxygen has sapped your intellect. Put up those dumb, and we'll go a round or two for a pound or two — it's cold as a cucumber on concrete.

A HARD GOD (1973)

by Peter Kenna

The only really good Australian three-hanks play. Rich, warm, comic, big-hearted, lush. It is about the transience of human closeness and about loss. The portrait of Dan and Aggie Cassidy has more love in it than there is in any other Australian play, and that is what makes the loss so moving, when Aggie learns of Dan's cancer.

THE FLOATING WORLD (1974)

by John Romeril

One of the most truly original of recent plays — throwing together a rich collection of carefully observed anecdotal material and mixing it with funny, savage theatricality. It tells the story of a typical Australian male's pilgrimage to the alien region which surrounds his country, but which he and most Australians have only known in war. The experience thoroughly breaks down his typicality, as he returns, in time as a POW, on the Burma-Thailand railway, with 18 different diseases at once.

HARRY: *The 1974 Woman's Weekly Cherry Blossom Cruise. (He continues the chase under LES's nose.)*

LES: *Knows the way of football to know the way of horses. A new man. I was well again. A skeleton. So were you. I can't tell you how good it felt. I was well again! A new man! I was well again.*

(We leave LES to his institutionalised future.)

MAKASSAR REEF

(1978)

by Alex Buzo

Also about the difficulty of intimacy, but in this case the barrier to living is

compromise and disappointment, rather than cancer and death. It is the most stylish Australian play, drawing on the grand romantic conventions of *Camille* et al. It then uses these, with a sophisticated, substantially rich dialogue unlike any other, to zero in on the sad consciousness people have to make which undercut their romantic ideals. Like *A Hard God* it ends (almost) with a moving image of a lonely, bereft woman struggling not to give up.

TRAVELLING NORTH (1979)

by David Williamson

This and *Makassar Reef* reveal the new minority of concern, mastery of craft and subtlety of effect which the "old guard" of the 70s have found. In the play the older generation flies north to the sun, sexual passion, old age and death, the younger stays south with the cold, bitterness, fecundity and a new generation. The play charts comically and movingly the ties that bind them and the forces that drive them apart.

THE MAN FROM MUKINUPIN (1979)

by Dorothy Hewett

This has the one quality which the rest of the "old guard" have perhaps lost, but which first endears them all to us — boldness. It is a splendid raucous celebration of a certainty in the wherewith of W.A. and it manages to bring in both the nostalgic detail of the day to day lives of the characters and the grand issues of life and love and war and death which rule over them. It uses songs, verses, poetry and comic turns in a bewildering but mesmerising profusion found nowhere else.

CLEMMY: *I wish I could go with them.*

ZEEK: *Where would you go?*

CLEMMY: *Anywhere. There was me in a cage called Mukinupin, when I used to balance on a rope amongst the stars.*

ZEEK: *Sun, moon and stars, all stars things.*

CLEMMY: *But I fell, I fell (she beats with her clutch on the rope.)*

ZEEK: *The stars are above, wherever we are. We walk the earth and gaze into eternity, we ride with Andromeda, on the holes in heaven.*

A national repertoire cannot be built on 12 plays. Another list, for a larger

one, might include *The Sassy Sewie*, *Bronze Jones*, *Ned Kelly*, *Ruby Hughes*, *Ruby River*, *The Chapel Perilous*, *Nixon and Ahmed*, *Treason*, or others. Also the list above stops at 1979. Instruct suggests that *The Precious Woman* or *Welcome the Bright World*, and certainly Patrick White's new masterpiece *Signal Driver*, might be included in future lists.

But it was our attempt to be comprehensive last year, in the guide to Playwrights (May, 1981), which caused the most controversy. Everyone was scrambling to be included in the list of also-rans. Not being controversialists we will leave it at this.



Max Gillies as Man in Sketch. . .

SEWELL, NOWRA AND DICKINS

**John McCallum
analyses the
newest wave
triple-bill**

In the last two issues *Theatre Australia* has published interviews with four important Australian playwrights and an editorial entitled "A National Drama?". If, as the introduction above claims, dramatists have lost touch with their audiences, then it has come at a time when their articulacy and seriousness of purpose have never been greater. Instead of attempting to survey the whole range of new writing, we look in three (in particular, Stephen Sewell, Louis Nowra and Barry Dickins

The problem is summed up by the case of Stephen Sewell. He has said,

"To me much Australian writing of the '70s was droll, caricature and satire. It strikes me that the theatre, the writers, are behind, not leading the audience. My intentions are to express as clearly as I can the kinds of contradictions operative in our society (and the individuals who are part of it) in the process of transforming it"

And yet the response to *Welcome the Bright World*, his most serious work so far, was controversy, not so much about the issues it raised as about whether it was too long or too intellectually ambitious. "Sewell is preaching to an effete Nimrod audience that they ought to care, yet the credibility gap between the world of the play and that of the audience is enormous". It seems impossible to get the society to listen to the ideas, let alone be transformed by them.

To compound the irony, one of the key issues in *Welcome the Bright World*

is that of radical commitment versus liberal disengagement. No one would question the small-liberal credentials of the Nimrod audience, but you have only to listen to hours of foyer-talk — all about charity and home renovations and meaningful relationships — to be aware of the credibility gap. Max Lewin, one of the scientists in the play, is a man who has spent his life believing that you can involve yourself in your work, and work for compartmentalised causes, without considering the total social and political context of your actions. The play reveals the personal and moral catastrophe such an attitude can cause.

And yet the play is set in Germany not Australia — the Germany of modern political German films. Perhaps in Australia, so far, you can afford to pursue your own interests independently of their social context. And perhaps that is why Nimrod audiences do not feel too confronted.

The political construction which people put on the play depends on their own established political perspective. Many critics do not, in fact, seem to have seen it as "a clear expression of the kinds of contradictions operative in society", but as a propaganda piece, a bit more complicated, and longer, than usual. To me this is a naive response, but then my political viewpoint is closer to Sewell's than to his play's critics. Sewell may have to incorporate the reactions of his target audience more closely into his plays' arguments (as Patrick White tried, unsuccessfully perhaps, to do in *By Turn*).

Louis Nowra is a writer of such fine theatrical sense and ability to excite, that it is astonishing that it is not perfectly clear what his plays are about. He has shown, in *Plains*, a love of intriguing ambiguity, and in *Inside the Island* a refusal to pursue any metaphorical implications of his central violent action — an action of dislocation and social breakdown which in other hands might be used to say all kinds of things about society. Nowra has a great reticence about being specific, and yet his plays are full of grand, violent concrete action. His plays resonate thematically without striking a clear note. This is, of course, quite deliberate, and a product of his concern with the ambiguities and contradictions of people attempting to exercise power over each other, but it



Judy Davis and Martin Vaughan in Nowra's *Inside the Island*.
Photo: Peter Moldersman.

does not give audiences much to hang on to. Without a framework for understanding we are left passive victims of his theatrical craftsmanship — like Ivan's tongueless victims in *Jeune Femme* or the soldiers in *Inside the Island*.

The Precious Woman is different. The characters' statements and actions are still all confusingly relative to each other, but we are led gradually along a clear path to consider the relation between power and compassion. The play argues that it is easy to feel compassion for helpless victims but difficult to feel compassion for guilty victims. The horror of the events of the play makes compassion inevitable and a virtue. Su-Ling's final act of compassion, for the callous tyrant Bao, her son, is therefore very confronting.

Sewall and Nowra have been acclaimed as our two great new serious dramatists, and yet in each there remains an austere distance from the society for which they write. Neither has written much about contemporary Australia (a fact in which each seems to take some pride) and so what specific personal or social relevance each has for audiences must be inferred with a lot of

hard work. Hard work can be very rewarding for an audience, but the need for it may explain the present elusiveness of local drama.

Harry Dickins is a writer who has not yet been greatly acclaimed, but who many people seem to think is about to hit his straps. The reason for this may be precisely the huge difference between him and writers like Sewall and Nowra. Where they are intellectual and distant he is aggressively personal and emotional. Where they are theatrically disciplined and craftsman-like, he is wild and a barbarian. Where they write about distant places, times and events, he writes about the grubby streets and bush huts around him. Where they write complex, epic plays with lots of characters, he writes paranoiac raves for one or two actors. His self-proclaimed dramaticism may be what some alienated audiences now want.

Must of Lost Your Mind plays well — at first to be drunken ramblings for his characters. The structure is precise: that of an alcoholic binge. He presents naïf, articulate characters, and then uses their drinking to disclo-

their articulation and reveal the sad, desperate, lonely outcomes underneath. As they reveal themselves they talk about their past and present experiences and try to make sense of it. In the attempt to make sense of it they reject it all, but by the time, in *The Death of Minnie*, says that sometimes she thinks the manic horror of the world is all her fault. She "gem-catted" by the suffering of the world. She takes cyanide, and suddenly all the blacked-out electrical appliances in her sad little room spring into action. Didons provides a social context more specific than do Sewall or Nowra, but then rejects it, alienated individual.

Whether this is an approach more in touch with the contemporary malaise is impossible to say. In the present theatrical malaise Nowra and Sewall are in a politically privileged position, but all three writers are in different ways concerned with one issue: the role of individual humanity in an increasingly dehumanised and deindividuated and social world. Perhaps, in David Hare, and Donald Horne before him, suggest, Australia is still too materially contented to be concerned with the problem. But the time is coming.

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The Currency Press

The Australian Drama Publisher

87 Jersey Road, Woollahra NSW 2025

Distributed by Cambridge University Press
Sydney and Melbourne

Playscripts and publishers

by John McCallum

When Currency Press began, 10 years ago, it was a little, specialist press producing Australian scripts to be sold by subscription to enthusiasts. Since then it has grown to become a large publisher, well specialising in drama, but with a more general market and a more varied list. There are now many good reading plays which it simply cannot afford to publish.

It is exciting, then, to welcome the latest speculative publisher of playscripts: Yackandeh Press, which looks like a 1980s version of the early Currency. They describe themselves as a "small or-

ganisation of Australian drama enthusiasts, who get a red of seldom being able to find script of plays we had seen or heard about". If they get through even their current programme without going broke they will have provided an invaluable service.

The books are very cheaply produced with a computer typesetter which gives a sort of pointillist typeface — inelegant but perfectly readable. They sell for \$2.00 (or \$2.50 from the publisher, with p&p) which these days is ludicrously cheap. You don't have to decide which ones to buy — get them all. Complete reading sets work out at

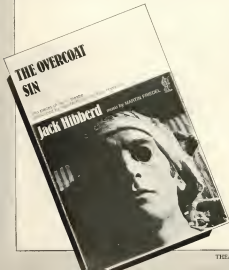
\$8 to \$16 — the price of one book in the outside world.

The list itself is also very impressive. It includes some new plays, such as Angela Foxworth's *Black/Greyhoundmen* and Harry Randa's *The Naked Gun*, both of which aroused some comment at last year's Playwrights' Conference. But it also includes plays which ought to have been published long ago, such as Jack Hibberd's *Paddy Sea* and John Breen's *Beauty*. In the first series there is also Dorcas Clarke's recent play, *Paradise Strabane Luther*.

Planned yet to come is a similarly wide range of plays, including Dorothy Hewett's *Joan*, John Breen's *Someday, My Finely I and Goodbye Ted*, Barry Deven's *Lonely Love Love*, Jack Hibberd's *Capeau Molester PC* and Phil Motherwell's *Dearest of the Abolition*. I will comment further on the plays themselves next month but for now let us welcome and wish well a publisher who has done what theatre-lovers have waited for a long time to pick up all those plays people keep saying are such a central part of our drama (and particularly many of the Carlton plays) and get them out to people. It is absurd to have a successful new wave of Australian plays, most of which few people have ever seen or read. Yackandeh, under the general leadership of Jeffrey Fadden, is helping change that.

The other small playwrights publisher is Queensland's Play Lab Press, who have been plodding away producing scripts for the amateur and schools market for several years. The latest is Philip Mann's *How Sharp The Bone*, which was part of the 1979 Ensemble Sydney Playwrights Season. It is another exercise in what is rapidly becoming a distinctive Australian genre: the all-male closed community drama of violence and lust. The book rather enthusiastically proclaims the play's subject to be "human nature, sexuality, authority, religion, acts of violence and distorted love" — which unlike the play itself, says it all.

From Currency, the benevolent madman agent of Australian play publishing, Lizzy Newer's *Inside the Island* and *The Process Woman* in one volume (pp \$9.95) and Jack Hibberd's *The Chessnut* and *Sm* in another (pp \$8.95). *The Woman* is commented on elsewhere in this issue. *The Chessnut* and *Sm* are minor theatre pieces, published in large format with a modified scene by Martin Fiedel. *Sm* is openly parody written for the Victorian State Opera, is very difficult to read, although it does contain a superb parody of the "domestic drama, exalting the felicitous of middle Australia" which the Composer and Librettist in the play meant to write. I have not heard the music. *The Chessnut*, a fascinatingly theatrical adaptation of Goethe's great story, is a masterpiece which inexplicably seems never to have been produced after its original APC production. It was last published in *Theatre Australia* in 1977.



Important Organisations

The Australian Writers' Guild The playwrights' registered trade union. In these difficult times all professional stage, screen and TV writers should belong. Writers who have never had a professional production may join as Associate Members, and receive many of the benefits. Write to Angela Wake, AWG, Suite 504, 83 York Street, Sydney, 2000.

The Australian National Playwrights Conference, Helps new and established writers, mainly by workshoping and

reading new scripts at an annual conference in Canberra in May. Write for details to The Administrator, ANPC, 12 William Lane, Woolloomooloo, NSW 2011.

The Australia Council. The Literature Board administers a range of grants to writers, chiefly, now, by subsidizing Writers-in-Residence. Write to: The Secretary, Literature Board, Australia Council, PO Box 302, North Sydney, 2060.



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U.K.

Triumphs of casting and comedy

by Irving Wardle

As superimposed spies continue to creep through the cracked panels of the British establishment, Julian Mitchell has successfully brought his long-running comedy to a 1990's piece tracing the careers of our Civil Service males back to the public school playing fields where the RGB were its first birds.

Another Country (Queen's) examines the self-governing hierarchy from perfect to fags which furiously makes its mark on for life. Apart from a visiting grade, as can continue mostly of boys, creating sophisticated and representing every shade of response from reluctant acceptance of the rules to

structured ideological defiance. Plenty of room for everyone to make his own terms with the silly old place, were it not for the first comic suicide of a boy due to be expelled for homosexuality.

This portrays a plot that explores the desires and hatreds of a miscellaneous collection of people who are enjoying their basic training in the art of personal concealment. The instant effect of the death is to provide a purge during which the liberal head perfect cracks, leaving the way open for an unpredictable baby-faced tyrant to succeed him, a move finally frustrated as the expense of the two characters you must want to assume control.

So far, the piece resembles many another public school memoir, such as Evelyn Waugh's lately unearthed *Charles Ryder's Schoolboy* (published in the *Times Literary Supplement* of March 5). Mr Mitchell's particular contribution is to link the Comintern to the Monastery through a relationship embodying the two dominant forms of rebellion against the public school ethic.

The hero in question is Bennett, a serious and unimpaired homosexual, and Judd, an effeminate Marxist, motivated by the insistent misperceptions that govern

him from getting on with his chosen line of research. Very cunningly, the play first presents them as if they are merely going through an adolescent phase. As the action develops, so they become increasingly formidable.

Judd may be a Socialist, but you cannot fault his impeccable resistance to joining the officer class. Bennett occupies an even stronger position. To be a communist in a school for the rich may be a joke. But homosexuality is no joke, and when he escapes a crushing by threatening to reveal a full list of his sex partners, you see how vulnerable that fative little society is to anyone who is prepared to spill the beans.

The two boys are not friends, but the effect of the events is to bring Bennett over to Judd's side as an enemy of the system, which has already equipped him with the techniques of secrecy and betrayal. Result: a spy is born.

Stuart Budge's production offers two marvellous lead performances from Rupert Everett (Bennett) and Kenneth Branagh (Judd) who has kept from drama school to resist stardom, and the show as a whole marks a triumph in juvenile casting.

Michael Frey's *News Off* (Lyric, Hammersmith) presents a meticulously



Rupert Everett as Guy Bennett and Kenneth Branagh as Tommy Judd in *Another Country*.

rehearsed sequence of theatrical disaster for a public who rarely get to see the real thing.

As hell in the world of theatrical fiction, it is set in three polite provincial towns and features a touring company working with stockists and usual intrigues who are obtaining a sub-fine. Trivers large under the lack of a virulent success. Initially conforming to the popular fantasy of what stage disasters are like.

We first hear him at a voice in the stalls, hearing a move in an aproned lady who has just wound up a phone conversation explaining that she is looking after the house while the master is in Spain, and a shrewd some doubt over which of the set's six doors she should choose for her exit with a plate of sandwiches. Throughout the evening, those redoubt keep coming home to roost, along with a bunch of flowers, a woman's inn, and other props that become increasingly accident-prone with every fresh appearance.

Meanwhile, it is one in the morning and the company are floundering through a combined dress and technical rehearsal, and it is two couples marriage through the promise, missing each other by light seconds and the language of shimmering doors, we also pick up the information that Doty (the housekeeper) has money in the house, the regime is a martyr to her constant letters, the aggressively forthright leading man can deliver complete a sentence, and the demure leading lady likes nothing better than leaking secrets about her colleagues' sex lives.

The first act consists of a fever inside a fever. Moving a month into the year, Mr. Frien takes the decision not to show us any more of his Trueman parody. Instead, Michael Ansara's act reverses into a backstage for a recap of the first act before an unseen audience of old age pensioners at the Theatre Royal, Glouce.

Company relationships have much deteriorated since the rehearsal, and there is some question of whether the pensioners will get their show. Doty having barricaded herself into her dressing room, and the leading man having sworn vengeance on his rival to her sickness. Amidst the cry and the secret strains of the director (initially dissembler Paul Eddington), is partly the ignominy unbeknown to the poignant ASM, Doty is finally gained into facing the public. But the subtle comedy from the unseen stage is widely exceeded by the main visible drama round the back. It is a sixteen-hour ballet of entrances through wrong doors, ruined-up props, attempted murder, successful sabotage (the leading man makes one flying entrance with his three-laced knotted together), and altogether, Michael Blake more's production office it into the most deliciously funny exercise in organized chaos I have seen for many a day.



The Hollywood invasion

by Karl Levent

Though East is East and West is West, the ocean seems definitely to be meeting these days on the stages of Broadway and off-Broadway. Film makers, movie stars and household names from Telenovelas have all suddenly decided to come East and go "legitimate". Broadway has become the latest Hollywood discovery.

Already come and gone: Film director William Friedkin (*The French Connection*, *The Exorcist*) and his version of the London hit, Tom Kempinski's *Over the Top* with Anne Bancroft and Max von Sydow, Suzanne Pleshette and Richard Mulligan in Bernard Slade's comedy



Cher and Sandy Dennis in *Come Back... Photo: Jean Pagnano*

Special Occasions — a opened and closed the same evening, Fry Duranay in a virtuoso vehicle, *The Game of an Acting Man* written for her by playwright William Alford. Both Ms Pleshette and Ms Duranay received favourable comment and were encouraged to return in more substantial packages.

At Pines is back again off-Broadway in David Mamet's *American Buffalo*. Movie director Robert Altman (*M*A*S*H*, *Nashville*) is making his Broadway debut with *Come Back... the Fire and Dams*, *Jimmy Dean*, *Jimmy Dean* with Cher, Karen Black and Sandy Dennis. Off-Broadway film

director Louis Malle (*Private Baby*, *Atlantic City*) tackles his first stage play, John Guare's *Life Before*, with English star Ben Cross (*Shogun of Fire*) making his American stage debut. Two other John Guare plays *Gardenia* and *Power and Honor* (a double-bill that with *Life Before* is part of a planned quartet) are being directed by Karl Reiz (*The French Lieutenant's Woman*), yet another movie man making his theatrical entrance.

And as if that were not enough, Paramount Pictures is getting into the act. The film company has set up a new division, Paramount Theater Productions, with a budget "approaching eight figures". Paramount states that it is not the goal of the theatre division to provide software for Paramount's many electronic entertainment outlets. It's just concerned that Paramount has first refusal on all media rights — cable, feature film, video cassette — for all its stage productions. Still, in these times of tight money an angel is an angel, with or without electronic outlets. One of the company's first ventures will be John Guare's drama *Apocalypse Now* starring Elizabeth Ashley and Geraldine Page.

Robert Altman, hailed as one of America's most original movie-makers, received nothing but encouragement when he first tried his hand at stage direction off-Broadway last season, with Frank Smith's *Two by Smith On Broadway*, with *Come Back to the Fire and Dams*, *Jimmy Dean*, *Jimmy Dean*, handling a cast of 11 on a large stage, Mr Altman's inexperience is easily obvious. Apart from choosing an inferior play, he has allowed it to be badly designed and to let each actor go her own direction — not his. It's all very sloppy.

But then, of course, to a Ed Graczyk's play. In a rural Texas town in 1935 members of a James Dean fan club are holding a reunion at their old meeting place, the local Woolworth's store. The action of the play alternates between the fan club's halcyon days in 1935 when James Dean was making *Come Dearly* and the reunion twenty years on. Although there's supposed to be a drought going on, the town surrounding this Woolworth's store is as high as a cowboy's eye. Each fan member has come back with a Secret and the evening is a series of anachronistic revelations — self-delusion, parody, irony, masochism and transcendent transcendence. This drama store depends on awful lot of degenere. A variable tide of rich, thick cash.

It is in fact an updating of the old B-grade movie, the kind of film Mr Altman would probably rather do than risk. With a stronger hand, this could have been one of those pay B-grades which are so bad they're good — but we are even denied that dubious pleasure. The act is so degraded that a serving counter divides the stage, with all the films some played sponge behind it. The result is we see only the top



Joseph Sommer and Ben Cross in *Lydia Brown*. Photo: Gerry Goodfellow.

hall of the actors — speedily translated into the past. A counter-reformation is definitely needed.

At the play's opening Frank Rich of the *New York Times* nicely summed up the town's curiosity, "The truly momentous question of the month is: Can Cher act?" A bit hard to judge in those limited surroundings, but certainly she is a spumed presence with an excessive show-biz sense to knock the show along whenever she can. Karen Black as the transsexual labourer well with an impossible part. Sandy Dennis has the pivotal role in the play and her non-performance sets the soap opera of any piece it might have. Mr Dennis' manuscripts have by now reached her vocally and physically except — the reality has to be seen and heard, not to be believed.

Off-Broadway, Louis Malle's directorial debut with John Guare's *Lydia Brown* deserves nothing but applause. This is one of those all-too-rare occasions when there is a coming together of director, cast and play — but it is the play that is the star. John Guare, who has always been noted for editorial comedy (his *House of Blue Leaves*, I reckon is one of the best American comedies of the last twenty years) now takes *The Ghost Ship* into drama with *Lydia Brown*.

What an odd, demanding, ambitious, haunting play it is! Set on Nantasket Island at the turn of the century, this would seem to be John Guare's giddy vision of America entering a new age. The plot is hopelessly melodramatic, and if I gave you details it would surely misinform you as to what kind of a play it is. It includes murder, revenge, a double suicide and Broadway typhoid. But the play is phenomenally astute.

It is a paradoxical work that consistently contradicts itself. It is sparse and plain spoken, but brimming with themes, symbols and metaphors; it is small, but ambitious; it is about despair, but has a convincing optimistic ending. It is also a ghost play and along with the characters the

shades of Ibsen and O'Neill are lurking everywhere.

Guare is coaching for the season this time. Such ambivalence usually has accompanying

provenance but these are diminished by Guare's vision where he sees everything through a deflating prism of comic stringencies. One is kept uncomfortably off-balance all evening.

All the performances are effective and some more than that. Joseph Sommer is splendid as the haunted father (he walks a tightrope of comedy, cynicism and pathos); Ben Cross, as avenging angel of an actor, gives a bold, theatrical performance; Roberta Maxwell as a dotty Irish servant has a fine line in madness; Louis Malle seems sensitive to John Guare's hundred nuances and just as in the film *Atlantic City* it's clear that on stage they make a great team.

A final mention of another West Coast visitor, television's Danny Diamond. The ever-aching Mr Diamond will star as a jockey in a revival of George M Cohan's musical *Little Johnny Jones*. Whether or not Mr Diamond proves to be on a winner, to be sure, the ghost of the great George M will give this latest Hollywood refugee a spirited Broadway welcome.

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SCHAUBUEHNE MOVED

The new building of the West Berlin "Schaubühne am Halleschen Ufer" was opened on September 20 with Peter Stein's production of *The Dreamer*. The theatre will in future be known as the "Schaubühne

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am Lehnmer Platz". New address: Kurfurstendamm 153, 1000 Berlin 31, Federal Republic of Germany.

RICHARD WAGNER FESTIVAL IN BAYREUTH

For the festival in 1982 Wolfgang Wagner, the director of the Bayreuth Festival, announced a new production of *Parsifal* staged by Gert Fröhlich with János Levente conducting, to mark the centenary of the world premiere of *Parsifal*. *Tristan and Isolde*, *The Mastersingers of Nuremberg* and *The Flying Dutchman* will also be on the year's programme.

THE NATIONAL THEATRE OF MANNHEIM

will be the first German company to perform spoken theatre in China in May 1982 in Peking.

A PEKING OPERA COMPANY

from the Peoples Republic of China will visit Perth, Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane on a 5 week Australian tour between February and April 1983.

Theatre Reviews



A.C.T.

Words and images

EINSTEIN ORIGINAL SIN

by Marguerite Wells

Perhaps one day reasonable men will be free to treat reasonable women as equals, not from a burning sense of the necessity to redress centuries of wrongs, but simply because it never occurred to them to treat in any other way. The way we're going now, we may reach that happy state in my lifetime, but probably not. At any rate, I shall certainly be too old to care, having fought all the necessary battles in youth and middle-age. And those battles will have been fought against my own brightened generation, not against the happier generations of our grandchildren, who, with any luck, will be free of the infection, and will raise a quizzical eyebrow at history and wonder what all the fuss was about.

Either of these plays would tell them: Einstein, on his death bed, debates the salvation of his life — his goals — with two younger selves. His nephew of his family, the schizophrenic of his younger son, his recommendation to the American President that atom's energy be developed for warlike purposes, and his divorce from his first wife, a physician, to marry a little woman who ministered uncomplainingly to his needs for the rest of her life. His first wife had had intelligence beyond the requirements of her gender. It is a mistake for an intelligent woman to marry a brilliant man. It's better for the woman to have no brain at all. A man cannot work if he has to be prepared to go home to an intellectual evening meal.

It is a play with some rather large staging difficulties. Two of the characters, the younger Einstein and the middle-aged one, never communicate directly with each other, but only through the old Einstein, a large and demanding role. None of the three was what you would call a man of action and the action of the play is indoors, behind desks and the rest of things that you see. A Jagger was the young Einstein in rocking a cradle and the middle-aged one emptying a urticaria of raw green apples onto his desk.

Yet the production never flagged. It was

carefully carved and carefully lit, with good accent work and fine make up, and perhaps the greatest example, a unity of style that has been very hard to achieve in Canberra, in professional productions as well as amateur. The dialogue is so full of ideas that one sometimes got lost in following an interesting train of thought that it proposed, but was gripped back to the play by a soliloquy from the audience. George Whaley gave a fine, warm performance which, supported by well calculated direction, kept the production together. It was warming to watch a brilliant and sensitive man dealing accounts with himself in preparation for a peaceful death, to think that there are perhaps some people who ask more of themselves than morality actually demands; that the unworked problems of his life were in fact pretty much out of his control, and that he need feel no guilt.

Images from the Background is a series of four theatre pieces looking at the cultural myths that define men and women. *Standard Operating Procedure* treated violence against women, *It Bleeds, It Sleeps* (reviewed in *TA* under an original title, *Sleeping Beauty*), examined attitudes perpetuated by fairy stories and the morality of Christianity.

The play is what it claims to be — a series of images, with development, but no plot, an enactment of myths, not the telling of a story. What remains with the audience is not the words (in *Einstein* it is very much the words that count), but *Steady* the visual images and *secondarily* the sounds. Within the prison of the lowest statements is the carnival of associated sex, the dreams of romance and promises, of the warmth and fullness of sensuality, the night club, the dance hall, the thinly disguised

metaphors that serve the search for sexual partners, the broiled and the porralago. Outside the carnival, and often encroaching but always encircling it are the forces of religion, the church walls, the frustrated and scornful rebuffs of the priest and the men the flagellant mortifying the flesh, the projection onto women of the pain of the fall of man, and the poison it brings into relationships between men and women.

Words are not the strength of the play, nor of the company. Speeches often tended to diminish the power of the physical. It puts a highly individual and controversial view of the relationship between religion and social psychology, treating a problem that we all hope is in its dying agony. But it puts it brilliantly and beautifully, weaving images of light and shadow, trading promises and unspoken promises, crystallising an aspect of our society that has certainly existed and does exist, although it may not be as pervasive as the play implies.

Images from the Background (Theatre Art T. Turner), Arts Centre, Canberra. Opening 28 March, 1982.
Direction: Michael Baskley, Production Design: Jason Dawson, Costumes: Lolly Smith. Lighting: Chris Pignatelli. Stage Manager: Jason Smith, Assistant: Bill McChesley, Dramaturg: Michael Baskley.
Cast: Alfred (the young Einstein), Duncan Cameron, Einstein (middle-aged) John Dawson, Professor Albert Einstein, 1950s, George Whaley.
(Professional)

Original Sin directed by the company. Third place in the series. Images from the Background. First Gallery Theatre Company, Children's Centre Hall, Canberra. Opening 2 April, 1982.
Direction: Carol Woodhouse, Production Manager: Tony Cox.
Cast: The Woman: Rose Cooper, The Son: Marianne Doyle, The Wife: Josephine Leckham, The Man: Tony Woodhouse, The Priest: Robert Williams, The Clerk: Peter Murphy.
(Professional)



John Dawson and George Whaley in Theatre A.C.T.'s *Einstein*.

N.S.W.

Social and sexual injustice

THE SUICIDE

PEOPLE ARE LIVING THERE

FUNNY IDEAS

THE PROVOK'D WIFE

by Michael Le Moignan

Sydney's theatre companies seem fascinated by stories of suicide and self-destruction. Three of the plays reviewed this month deal with such themes, through the eyes of playwrights who are, respectively, Russian, South African and Scottish/Australian. There is some common ground, in that in each case the fatal choice appears to lie with the individual, while it is really the victim's immediate society that is at blame.

The outstanding play of the month is *The Suicide*, a 50-year-old Russian work that was banned in rehearsal by Stalin and has still never been performed in the USSR. This is a real find, an international classic which deserves to be more widely seen. Aubrey Melior's translation and arrangement of the text and his sensitive pacing and direction add much to enhance and absorb the audience.

There is an initial resistance to be overcome in recommending the play to friends. I have found a strong distrust of the role and reluctance to risk being depressed by an unknown Russian playwright. Nobody wants to go any closer to the edge. But *The Suicide* is not depressing; it gives a cerebral and comfortable way to affirm the value of life. It re-discovers a reason and a potential to go on living and it strikes a common, cross-cultural chord.

Tragedy is out of fashion, among writers as well as audiences, but the tragic element in drama is a very fundamental one, and it has a curious way of waking up in plays, whether or not the writers are on reading terms with Meliorism. Ibsen's play is a tragedy-comedy, unsurprisingly in its attack on dehumanising bureaucracy and hypocrisy, but deadly in the hope it holds out for the future.

Finally, an unemployed man, Semyon Semyonovich (Peter Carroll) has become so disillusioned with his life in life that he decides to kill himself. At least, he goes on



Robert Alexander and Peter Carroll in Semyon's *The Suicide*.

live as announcing his intention to do so — and is immediately besieged by representations of various factions, numerous and chaotic, all wanting him to gain publicity to their particular cause by committing suicide on their behalf. As a potential corpse, Semyon has a value which far exceeds his value as a living, social victim.

The flattery and kind treatment to which he is subjected re-kindles in Semyon Semyonovich his sense of self-love, and therefore his love of life, and he becomes reluctant to go through with his planned suicide. He re-discovers his individuality.

The play's political arguments are made with great force and wit: one can see Stalin's point. It chronicles the particular failure of the Bolshevik Revolution to meet the legitimate needs and aspirations of the Russian proletariat. But apart from historical interest, Ibsen's play is deeply humanitarian and involving on an emotional as well as an intellectual level. Rather than play a supporting role in one of Ibsen's plays, Ibsen came up writing for the theatre after this, and succeeded in living to a ripe old age. His contribution is nevertheless a lasting one, and Aubrey Melior deserves our gratitude for this spectacular revival.

Peter Carroll's Semyon Semyonovich is a performance of consummate misery. At first an unappealing, self-pitying no-hoper, he gains our sympathy almost steadily, gradually taking us into his confidence and sharing us the predicament from his point of view. By the final act, he has become in a sense Ibsenian, and he has the audience nodding on his side.

The company worked with great fluency and precision to achieve some dazzling visual effects, and brilliantly associated scene

changes. Richard Roberts, Semyon's new Resident Designer, provided an ingenious and highly adaptable set, rather reminiscent of a drawing by Escher, in which the doors of opportunity opened on us and the corridors of possibility were endless and led nowhere.

Like *The Seagull*, *After Fagard's People Are Living There*, presented by Studio Sydney at the Wynyard Theatre, is a "something is rotten in the state" play. Its demonstration of social injustice is couched in sterner terms, with less humour to sweeten the pill.

The setting is a random Johannesburg boarding-house. It is Mally the landlady's fiftieth birthday, and her lover (whom we never see) has just left her, explaining unkindly that there is no longer a woman for birthday parties, with crops, cake and lemonade, is a ghastly parody of interrupted party. Leda Baker's Mally is a heart-rending character: her social ambitions run high higher than beer and sausage on a Saturday night, but even so this she is doomed to frustration. There is a deep pathos about the character, almost that of a tragic heroine.

The other residents of Mally's guest-house are little better off than herself. Shorty (Richard Evans) is an itinerant musician, busy (Diana Austin) married Shorty to escape and now wants to marry someone else to escape from Shorty, Dan (Robert Dillies) is unemployed and probably, unemployable, a cynic who sees too clearly by his own good or bad fortune. This last was the part originally played by Fagard himself.

The wigness irony of *People Are Living There* is that in Africa, as country other than South Africa, these oppressed characters



John Gaden as Salieri — performance of a lifetime — in *STC's Amadeus*.

Performance of a lifetime

AMADEUS NIGHT AND DAY

by Michael Le Moignan

Sydney's theatre truly has an embarrassment of riches at the moment, with the unfortunate result that some good shows are not getting the audience they deserve. It is impossible to see everything, and this month three productions of which I had heard good reports have had to be omitted — *American Dreams* at the Bonds Pavilion, *The Anniversary* at the Philip Street Theatre and *Leftovers* by Caelebody at the Stables (late night). Our apologies.

Two more have just opened at Theatre Australia goes to press — the Sydney Theatre Company's *Amadeus* at the Theatre Royal and *Night and Day* by Tom Stoppard at the Marion Street Theatre, Kollara. Both productions are well worth seeing.

Amadeus is a rather grand play by Peter Shaffer, based on the death-bed claim by a rival composer, Salieri, that he was instrumental in Mozart's premature death, to the point of murdering him. It is directed by Richard Wherrett in splendidly operatic style, to suit both the subject matter and the play's prevailing mood of gothic fantasy.

From start to finish it is John Gaden's play. In Salieri, he gives us perhaps the performance of a lifetime, a character pitched somewhere between Raskin and

Iago, who ruthlessly lays bare his own heart and soul and finds them black. On stage and in the spotlight for most of the play, Gaden's control of the audience and sheer craftsmanship are byronic.

It is the last night of his life, he tells us. He is a little, wasted old man, wringed in years dressing-down and a woody hat against the cold. He wishes to confirm his own to us, the audience, the "ghosts of the future" he believes he has conquered. The dressing-down falls away, the woody hat is replaced by an eighteenth century powdered wig and he is instantly the sprightly young court composer of forty years earlier. An Italian at the Viennese court, his rivals are distinctly Muscovite.

Salieri wanted desperately to write the new mass, the great mass of the eighteenth century. His gifts were considerable and his success enormous (he became the best known musician in Europe) but his work is now considered second rate and is rarely performed. His tragedy was that in the young Mozart, Fate delivered into his hands the genius he would like to have been. He was perhaps the only man of his time fully to appreciate Mozart's greatness, and he did everything possible to thwart the composer's hopes and drive him to poverty, drink and despair.

In short, Shaffer's Salieri is a black villain as you could point — but we do not hate him. John Gaden brings out such a painful humanity in the old man, such a searching honesty, that we can almost forgive the various selfishness of his youth. This is masterly acting and the result is a subtle, complex and penetrating portrayal that will last long in the imagination.

Like Richard Wherrett's earlier *Cyrano* and *Chicago* for the STC, *Amadeus* is a production which manages to be honestly spectacular without compromising its most intimate moments. Nigel Leverage's lighting was quite superb and contributed significantly to the enjoyment of the production. Drive Forgive in the piano, starring Mozart and Linda Cropper as his wife both gave excellent performances but they were inevitably overshadowed.

The program shows a host of Mozart knocked from his pedestal, and from what one can judge, that is an accurate appraisal of Shaffer's attitude to the composer. It is a curiously cruel play, for all its qualities, and I think the reason may be Shaffer offers us no pleasure to go with his negative. He seems to support Salieri's claim that "Goodness is nothing in the children of art." It's not exactly an uplifting play, but a very good one.

Tom Stoppard's *Night and Day*, directed by Terence Clarke, is the best production to be seen at the Marion Street Theatre for some time.

There is much to delight — good performances from Tom Oliver and John Plowley and from two more newcomers, Paul Williams and Maureen Rasmussen, a generous helping of Stoppard's witty and elegant verbal gymnastics, an intriguing and adaptable revolving set by David Spode and one clever stage illusion, which completely tricked the opening night audience.

One reservation about the production concerns the central character, Ruth Carter, played with great charm by Carol Rapp. The charm was the problem: it did not seem to keep up with the acid of her acid to the audience. This branding of the situation to insert verbal "bubbles" bubbles in an interesting device, but in practice a bit tricky and intrusive. Stoppard over-uses it without having polished it to perfection. The other regret was that Leslie Dymally seemed to be concentrating too hard on his characterisation, to the cynical, hard-bitten journalist, and not allowing himself enough room and time to make the most of such comic set pieces as a series of sharp-witted parodies of newspaper styles.

Overall, by the play is set in an imaginary African republic threatened by Russian-backed rebels. I say imaginary because the true locale of Stoppard's play is the mind. They could be set anywhere and played with almost any characters. He employs plot, comedy and characterization as discretionary tactics, to waken up his audience to the point where he can slip a perplexing, pure intellectual challenge. He is a master of theatrical effect, he takes an audience's fancy as if smoking a cat brings it rubbing its back on the floor with paws up asking for more, and then he tells it to sit up and think about something.

It is a Zen belief that laughter can trap the

versus again, the imported and the native. The Australians, it seems, move to a different music, and which sounds suspiciously like Chad Morgan's. For their part, history has not tuned their cultural or religious perceptions to concert pitch to be used in the ultimate focus of self-respect and self-definition. It never occurs to the weary television captions that "culture" could be regarded as the pin-pointed conflicting factor standing between a people and political and sociophysical space — Dad and Dave will do for them. And indeed, Berthouze certainly didn't envision the Nazis.

While presenting its facile reconciliations of reconcilable antitheses, the play overall is contradictory in tone — as before the land where some nightmarish end — and celebratory of the courage of those who survived the passage from the old to the new. The highly theatricalised form is the major device for promoting the passions of the material and of suggesting resolutions are merely spelt out in the text. The apparent cultural opposition of high and vernacular are resolved when the full cast swing into a graduation number of "You meet the most people in your dreams". Past and present merge in the music, consciousness of Paul Unger, the premier figure who projects the interwoven patterns of experience and fantasy, of the past and of what the mind makes of it to call its "haughty". Art and history make mutual common in the song numbers, comedy romance and image tracks. Governing all is

the Grimm-like Wicked Queen (brilliant Alice Black) who persecutes the refugee Dwarfs, a potent folkloric embodiment of the subterranean terror distilled from a civilisation nurtured amongst dark forests, a hellish antithesis of nightmarish make-believe can come to tragic life in historical realities. There are, in fact, worse places than Hay or even Blackdog — Buchan for one — not to mention the unexplored hell of history and of tortured memories.

From its beginnings two years ago as a basically one-act play scripted for students, *Hell and Hay* has grown into an ambitious piece of considerable stature to match the intricacy of its documentary material and the complexity of its themes. La Bonte's production does justice to some facets of its potential while leaving others yet unexplored. The song and dance style, which the theatre has made a honest possibility, have received uneven if dedicated treatment, while the reflective passages are sensitively rendered. The moral gender can do however before the point that the play is not primarily about lovingly rounded "humanist" characters, but about an eternal pattern of national experience, dealing in the dramatic language of mythic types and ideas. The ironic assumption, of anarchistic versus idealistic, is the risk run when the play is given an all-male cast, as in the ANPC reading last year.

The TN Company appears untried with a surfeit of energy, which will be put to good use in the ambitious programme of operatory and community touring it has

planned for this year. Emblematic of this energy is David Pelt's *We Can't Play! We Won't Play!* directed by the new Artistic Director Rod Walker; a furious explosion of political force which, even when produced fairly (initially from the English-learned script, makes its local relevance forcefully felt. Inflation, personal cops, institutionalisation of reformist parties and unions — how could it not? And what splendid female roles. Individual passages of ensemble comedy rise to inspired levels, the groing "birth" in raked grooves, and the current end-explanations of multiple baby paraphernalia and pop-influenced dreams.

As the man of many parts, Sean Mee worked as opening night to a face level a night more agile than the rest of the cast, giving a series of top-empowered layers up to what one imagines to be the ideal crated path of loony obsession. As *We Can't Play* seems to be on its way out, it should bring in new audiences a veritable and sharply politicised piece of theatre with performance values in abundance and a refreshing commitment to challenging stock responses to the last days of capitalism.

Hell and Hay by Richard Fotheringham. La Bonte Theatre, Brisbane Qld. Opened March 18, 1982. Director, Robert Kilgour.

(Review)

We Can't Play! We Won't Play! by David Pelt. TN Company, Brisbane Qld. Opened March, 1982. Director, Rod Walker. Stage Manager, Paul Mueller. Cast, Joany Benbowen, Victoria Arthur, Ross O'Brien, Geoff Cartwright, Sean Mee, Paul Horley.

(Production)



Jewish interests found for Australia in *Hell and Hay* at La Bonte. Photo: Laura McKen.

S.A.

ADELAIDE FESTIVAL '82

Among the throngs of visitors to this year's Adelaide Festival were two of Britain's top theatre critics: Michael Billington of *The Guardian* and Michael Coveney of the *Financial Times*. These are their impressions of the two-week experience that is rapidly becoming known as Sharman's Festival.

MICHAEL BILLINGTON

When I arrived in Adelaide for this year's Festival I was surprised to encounter a good deal of low-key post-intellectualism of the event: no stars, no glamour, no prizes was the general theme. By the end of the Festival, however, there was widespread agreement that Jon Sharman had put on what could well be the best Adelaide Festival ever: an intimate, unpretentious assembly of cultural goodies but something that reflected both his own predilections and recurrent human dilemmas. If I had to characterise the 1982 Festival, I would try it was one that swung between a fascination with sexual angst, violence, nihilism and a cautious celebration of popular performing skills: a view, in fact, from the cry of the cornered human soul in *The Makropulos Affair* to the exultation of the liberated human body (one of which defied gravity by walking on the ceiling) in *Cross On*.

For me this moment of anger and joy was seen at its best in the work of Pina Bausch's Wuppertaler Tanztheater which presented us with a quasi-anonymous mythic *Kenneth*, played in Thiebaux Town Hall, was a demonstration of the demons that lurk under our polite social exterior using a dance-hall as its key visual metaphor. *Shardana*, in the Festival Theatre, was about the portents of male-female relationships and had the skull-battering impact of night Strindberg plays in one evening. And 1980, the most stunning of the three, was a Procrustes

vaudeville that showed how the fears, the dreams, the insecurities of childhood are prolonged into adult life. But what made 1980 the quintessential Festival show (and the one that I can imagine Jon Sharman theatre techniques, magic, vaudeville, circus, snake-like dancers through the auditorium. It also had that peculiar German ability (which I last encountered in Peter Kern's *Sommerfest*) to present us with a huge number of things happening simultaneously.

The Wuppertaler Tanztheater was great because it offered us a strong personal vision working through a synthesis of all the performing skills. David Hare's *A Map of the World*, presented by Sydney Theatre Company, was far less the other great Adelaide event because it showed the weakness of ironic detachment and political correctness achieving a kind of emotional synthesis. My feeling was that Hare had set out to write a play about the ageing Western indifference to the burning issues of the Third World, but, although that was still there, the play had also become an attempt to resolve Hare's own personal conflict between a Walden pit for language and a political Utopianism. Hare increasingly reminds me of the late, great Kenneth Tynan: a radical in love with style. The difference is that he works out his internal dilemmas in drama rather than criticism, and when made his Festival play to emerge was that you could sense what it cost him to write it. That was even more impressive than what it must have cost Adelaide and Sydney to stage it.

Not all the theatrical events in Adelaide reached this exalted level. Patrick White's *Signal Driver*, though very well acted by John Wood and Melissa Jaffer as a warring married couple clinging perilously together down the ages, seemed too flimsy a structure to support its intended portrayal of Australian racial decay over a 60-year time-span. And Melbourne Playbox Theatre's productions of Sam Shepard's *Beast Child* and *Care of the Starting Line*, though again well acted by Gary Files and Michelle Sappington, were somewhat handicapped by Peter Corrigan's aggressive architectural design in both plays. Shepard's preoccupation with dislocated family life should spring out of a Norman Rockwell-like seductiveness.

But these were mild blemishes on a dazzling festival that bore Sharman's unmistakable imprimatur, that contained some genuinely uplifting experiences (not least the dramatic concert performance of Berkeley's *The Commencement of Four* given by the Australian Youth Orchestra) and that also reached out to embrace the Adelaide public. Watching kids clamber through the multi-coloured inflatable sausage on the banks of the River Torrens as their parents enjoyed a free open-air concert of school folk-dancing, it was hard not to conclude

this was the best effort festival I had ever attended one that combined genuine populism with a remorseless fascination with the Balthusque trinity of birth, copulation and death.

MICHAEL COVENEY

Like all first time visitors to Adelaide, I had Percy Grainger's pre-recorded proudly pointed out to me as I drove in from the airport. Much more alarming was my first serious social encounter in the hotel lobby. "This is Patrick White" said Michael Billington before disappearing in search of a bottle of vodka for the author. It was Sunday. The silence was deafening. I realised that I had just read White's autobiography in London. Minutes later one I commented on the warmth of the reception accorded his new play *Signal Driver*. Even worse. The great man looked down at me with pitying, weary-eyed indifference and fixed his gaze on nothing in particular just above my head.

In fact, as I later discovered, the reception of *Signal Driver*, while warm, was too respectful. After his previous Adelaide Festival disaster, it was of the critics were guiltily relishing a foretaste too. At least in Dublin they had the good grace to wait for James Joyce to die.

A line in *Signal Driver* haunts me. As the old couple wait in vain for the last bus to nowhere, the Baudelaire connection, Ivy declares she wants to rub the red dust on her face and find out what she's been living for in this country. Coming to terms with one's landscape was a theme of Jon Sharman's amazing festival and, as he admitted in the final Forum of a series I chaired in Elder Park each lunchtime, this quest was the motivation for his own return to Australia. It emerged most powerfully elsewhere in the Edward Hopper exhibition and the Sam Shepard plays performed by the Playbox Theatre Company of Melbourne.

David Hare's *A Map of the World* attacked the idea to discuss how persecuted liberalism copes with the vast problems of the Third World. At a particularly well-attended Writers' Work conference, Hare discussed the power of art with an audience. After seeing one of his plays, a man had written to him saying he had decided to leave his job. This pleased the playwright, but not nearly so much as a letter received shortly afterwards in which another man said he had seen the same play and decided to leave his wife.

I come with a myriad memories of this exceptionally stimulating and brilliantly run festival. The blank, mezzanine gossamer of the Pina Bausch Wuppertaler Tanztheater, the swing of Elizabeth Soderstrom in *The Makropulos Affair* and

has comment on the Forum platform that was the first one Brian Thomson's immediately scaled high-tech design the felt like opening his door Down Under with a roaring chorus of "Don't Cry For Me, Australia", Edoardo Schall nipping into the "Bibbo Sam" in one of his two recent programs with the rigid fairy of a diamond puppet, his wife, Barbara Breslin-Schall (daughter of B.B.), turning green at my suggestion that one way of conveying the Barbers Ensemble would be to invite either Peter Stern or Fritz Busch to work there, a pleasant afternoon up at Carew with Roger Chapman, Director of the Youth Performing Arts Council, chatting about the Barbers theatre he is anxious to have left behind, and a frantic, balustrade day with mid-ranger George Kelly as we roamed round the Hopper, and Brian Thomson's *Two-Far Show* where old television programs were placed in a double historical context of material director and a photographic slide-show of world events.

At the Forum in Public Art, a harassed gentleman recounted how he had taken an old movie up to the Wangfield Dring only to visit the Festival Centre and find it posted up and sitting in the middle of an open air exhibition. Was this what we meant by Art, he wanted to know?

Although it now has a 20 year-old history, the Adelaide Festival urban era, at least under Sherman, is a spontaneous, usually affair. The style was set by Sherman himself gliding easily between each event, ready with five minutes for anyone and shodding effectively around the periphery of parties, discussions and official functions. He has brought one of the world's leading companies, the Pina Bausch, to Australia, he has created a challenging yet generally accessible programme, and perhaps most importantly of all, he now begins his three-year contract as artistic director of the Lighthouse company based in the Festival Centre.

You get the feeling that things might jump a little even when the curtain has fell now.

Being and becoming

SIGNAL DRIVER

by Gus Worby

Signal Driver Is it an order, a plea, an instruction, a request? Is there a Driver? Someone in control, something which sets or governs the gestures made by travellers—those who are to be transported.

Is a programmed to stop — this apparatus?

How do you catch the guiding eye? If you do, is not the transaction complete? Is not

the bargain made? Are you not already there?

And change we hunger for a sign, an icon, a mandala — something at least, that does not change. In birth, a work, through marriage, in birth, in death we hunger for a sign of love which means more than the mere fact of its presence. We, the "valle", the Valdes. Then, the daughter, his mother's offering to God, and Ivy, the believer, fashioned to hold fast, burning in a cold fever of being. We, in the arena, who walk into the path of progress, proper for a moment by this or that means, only to drop a beat, lose time, miss a connection, and squat without shelter for the rest of our lives, waving — too far out, on under, to be noticed. Believing that things ought to connect. Trained. Sub-divided. Commanded. Together.



Melissa Jaffer (Ivy) and John Wood (Theo) in STC SA's Signal Driver.

In *Signal Driver* there is no heavy commitment to story, or laboured cause, effect and consequence. It involves the playing out, for a known audience, of three "images" in a typical married relationship. The action occurs in a married shelter, by a road, in a landscape, in a theatre. Each stage is set at a different point in the life-experience of the Valdes — after the First World War, during the postwar 1950's, in the frantic eighties. The substance of their engagement in the shelter is always the same: various on themes of salvation, survival, escape.

The music is at once acutely personal and of wide import. White accommodates both in this piece for four players and a public. First he creates two "super duos" and gives them the status of "Beings". They are the purely theatrical creations of the unconscious. They exist in the constant present but are permitted to know

everything, in and out of time — especially what will be. They are not, however, permitted to tell. They hint. They have compassion and wisdom, and, in these knowledges of certain and perpetual judgement they are whole.

Then come Theo and Ivy. They are "characters" — less real than the Beings, though drawn from life as we are: Theo and Ivy are in the process of becoming. Theo is a carpenter, and a thwarted artist. One who slowly erodes for a diminished cause, who converts his vision of a great love into a partnership serious enough to keep out the cold Ivy, in early life, is practical and businesslike. Fooled by religion, ignored, marred by the idea of marriage, she storms through the dangerous microscope to an old age of fire and anger, straining to move beyond a life which will not release her.

These characters are linked with the audience, whose awareness of reality is most in question. They walk to their on-stage shelter from among us, and reach for us, the passionate stage of development. Through them we are exposed to chance and humanity. But we are different than Ivy and Theo in that we can not feel the Beings. We are in the theatre not of it, not yet on stage but away at least from our habitat. We can therefore be shown, in the by-play, that in fact with ourselves is a game best left to characters. We must choose usually, in all things, before the mind runs on a road to nowhere returns us from shelter, Being and Becoming.

The production makes this statement. As the couple shuffle away from the stage into the darkness of the audience, turning their backs on the false dawn of the *Adelaide Festival*, the art statement. And light the great world of games with which Stephen Curtis has formed the surrounding and encroaching landscape, life and is drawn up and over the audience. It covers, engulfs, swallows, burns, incinerates, posets, reclaims, unifies. It also hangs over the shelter like the Roman cloud — a final solution.

In this first production Mel Arnfield and cast have genuinely scored the weight and substance of the work. As in film games it relied necessarily towards the culminating gesture — was to some extent determined by it. As a consequence there was a sacrifice of nuance and the happiness of these flows and fragments of quotidian union was somehow dulled. Yet even at this early stage, the production as a whole had clearly mastered the subtle shifts within relationships which are the heart of the work.

There were magnificent moments between John Wood and Melissa Jaffer, in the first and particularly in the third act. These concentrations of energies, the right-

S.A.

continued

ness of race, the blend of intellect and experience, are exceptional. There is, however, in the "dangerous" middle, a brittleness which comes close to miscalculation, as they tangle with the "Thickers" of the unconscious.

In the treatment of the Bangs there is some loss of energy and potential. They are forced to come in under the Voltes, to stay aside and play apart. One crosses moral and satirical maps which marks the successful parody of media sociology in Act One. Both Peter Cummins and Kerry Walker, joined with the quips and moods of Laila Vire's muses, have power to spare. Their Mo and po-faced creations deserve the honor to rip into the underbelly of seriousness and challenge the Voltes and the audience to reach for greater heights of awareness.

For this surely is the purpose of the play. If it needed to be written, there is no time for wasted effort. We are long past the point of "waiting" and there never was much joy in Lucky's dance.

Signed Over by Patrick White, Irish Theatre Company for the Adelaide Festival, S.A. Opened March 5, 1982

Director, Neil Armfield, Designer, Stephen Cooley, Lighting, Nigel Lonsdale, Music, Carl Vine, Stage Manager, Terry Martin

Cost, Theo Vekris, John Wood, by Voltes, Heltons, Jaffee, by Heltons, Peter Cummins, Set Design, Kerry Walker

(Photograph)

Right subjects, wrong plays

A MAP OF THE WORLD

PERCY AND ROSE

by Michael Morley

Although David Hare's *Map of the World* purports to consider the wider social issues of the time — third world poverty, the appropriation of personal and political involvement, the roles of the intellectual and the artist in society — it is essentially a quest for two voices. Robert Grubb's journalist begins as the more admirable, if slightly staid, voice, while Roshan Seth's co-presenter, Indian writer, expresses his own particular brand of laconic tolerance and disillusionment in the cultured and somewhat patronising tones of one who has seen it all and expects not so much to make the



Robert Grubb and Roshan Seth in SFC's Adelaide Festival production, *A Map of the World*. Photos: Brian Gance

best of a bad job, but further to modify his own low expectations to suit the world's mediocrity.

Of course, there is the stuff of dialogue and debate here, and David Hare's sharp, balanced writing often runs to the challenge, most notably in the contest scene where the two protagonists duel in words for the prize of Hare's version of a night with Maude (or, in this case, Peggy). The implausibility of this strand in the plot was only accentuated by having the prize changed simply on stage during the progress of the debate trying to work out where to look. Hare's strengths in the past has frequently been his women characters, the women in *Looking for Alice* and *Desires of Leaving* seem unlikely to be dramatic versions of male secret fantasies but turn out, on closer examination, to be much more complicated and ambiguous. The women in *Map of the World* seem to be struggling in the first scenes to get on from the periphery of the action — so as usual. Well before the end they have lost both ear and the author's interest.

By now it must be fairly clear that I do not

go along with the general critical enthusiasm for the play. I would like to think that the work, in giving theatrical shape to concerns which clearly derive from Hare's own view of himself as writer and social commentator, actually allows the characters identity, room to breathe in, and, yes, reality. But the play looks like nothing so much as a 1980's attempt to update the old expatriate trope — and satire — drama, where the figures are simply reflections of aspects of the author's own ego confronting themselves, rather than in or about society. In fact, the ending of the play, with Maude frozen in comic stupa, tries outwitted in a burst of light (how can? new dawn? brotherhood of man etc?) stands as an embarrassing indication of how not-to-end-a-play-over-if-you-don't-know-how-to-end-it. No-one expects a writer to provide neat or, indeed, any answers to questions he raises in his work. But he should at least respect the audience's readiness to take the questions seriously and not let them off with a tired piece of theatrical sleight of hand.

The sleight of hand is in fact typical of the

play's structure. The device of the film-within-a-play, of suddenly evolving themes of what we (possibly) mistakenly took to be a real hotel as it turned suddenly the camera and lights of a film studio, in time, and the obvious a corollary for the play's talk of relative values and modified attitudes. Money and audience are one thing but "you think I say what I mean and then find I am only ironically suggesting I mean what I say" is not a game I am particularly fond of. A Freudianist's treatment of equines such as centaurism, the role of ideology, tapscrum, action and reflection, political art or detached writing that holds with liberal values, doesn't seem together any more set against this rapidly sketched Indian background.

None of the above reservations apply to the two central performances which are honest, thoughtful and intelligent. Robert Grubb, rather more low-keyed than usual, and presides as in his portrayal of Swann, with a characteristic that deserves to be marked with his other notable performances over the last years. And Rosalyn Smith's controlled yet open characterisation of Marina gains in depth as the play progresses. Nor would I wish to deny the play's wit and intelligence as to query Ham's statements of purpose. And no critic should expect a writer to go on pursuing well-trodden paths which he no longer finds interesting. That there is a serious and important play to be written about the concerns of *Map of the World*, I have no doubt: that Ham can write as I am convinced. But then this play, in its present form, is that what I have yet to be persuaded.

My response to Bob George's *Percy and Rose* is much the same. Mercifully the play's talk at times avoids the tute and cheap double-entendre of Thomas Mader's *A Whop Round for Percy George*, though George is disturbingly candid about his interests in the sexual/sexual aspects of the George story.

It may be that when Australian finally get around to recognizing George for the important composer he was, and thus has out of the comfortable "Country Gardens" and "Shepherd's Hey" drawers, someone with a slightly less pretentious (or even openly vulgar or snide) approach will write the film play that demands to be written on the subject. Not that *Percy and Rose* seems to be quite as bad as some have made it out to be. Of course it shows the hand of the TV serial writer; of course the dialogue is banal in places, and the last twenty minutes are a complete miscalculation.

But there are merits in the writing, — the use of the Rippling stones as the start to establish George's imaginative world where seldom and fantasy hold hands, some of George's metaphors and the areas between him and his fiancée, Margaret For-

VIC.

Terrific performances and clear ideas

CURSE OF THE STARVING CLASS

BURIED CHILD

by Garric Hutchinson

Writers like Sam Shepard are no trouble getting up a lot of people's noses. Maybe it's not through anything deliberate on his part, but through the way information about him is received, his publicity, his annoying. And it goes in the way of his work.

Consider his legendary handsomeness. "Extraordinary handsomeness" was



Peter Onorati as Woody in *Curse of the Starving Class* at Play Box. Photo: Grant Hancock.

the camera overlooks in favour of the chasteed famous he shares with Robert Redford, is the asymmetry of his features, the several flaws that give his face a ragged quality. From one perspective, he is the embodiment of innocence, an angel, then another a sneering cowboy. His face takes on a genuine evil-like roundness from the front, his pale blue eyes peer out, intense, slightly askew. His profile on the other hand is deviously puerile." (*Excerpt 2/80*)

Is this a serious writer or a prankster?

Then there's his recklessness, his capriciousness, having to leave messages for

him at the SF Music Theatre, which Sam may or may not bother to return.

He's supposed to have raced greyhounds in England.

He played drums in that weird band the Holy Modal Rounders, had his script for *Zabriskie Point* knocked back by Paramount, had one affair with rock poet person, Fern Smith, hung around with Bob Dylan, and won the Pulitzer Prize for his play *Buried Child*.

He said of that "If I was gonna write a play that would win the Pulitzer Prize, I think it would have been that play, you know. It's sort of a typical Pulitzer Prize-winning play, it wasn't written for that purpose, it was a kind of test. I wanted to write a play about a family."

Shepard's written dramas, hundreds of plays since he arrived in New York in 1963 from California, Southern California. He's forgotten some of them, and so has everyone else, though they do leave some sort of lasting after image.

His attitude to theatre writing being a touch apocalyptic, a way of writing for the moment, is not far away from the more overtly political stance of John Russell. (And the best of both are in a similarly ambiguous relationship with their culture, critical and celebratory.)

Shepard's another one of the boys, not a "serious" writer — he's a maverick who uses all kinds of materials to make his plays.

In the past — before *Curse of the Starving Class* written 1976, and *Angel City* produced 1978, Shepard's use of arbitrary bits of action, extraordinarily outrageous props and settings, arcane dialects and languages, hermetic imagery, and a private mythology of rock, science fiction, the wild with west, dope lived his publicity as a vague writer, a rock writer in the theatre. But with his last three plays, *Curse of the Starving Class*, *Buried Child* and *True West*, he has confused the matter, seemingly giving up on nonsense of, say, *The Touch of Cream* (his prior "masterpiece") for an assured, seemingly naturalistic, yet weird preoccupation with the memory of O'Neill, Miller, Williams — the grand tradition of American plays-writing.

Of course, Shepard is stranger than these guys. Would they have a live sheep on stage, a fascination with towers, earthquakes, and the artifacts of American Life? Maybe they would nowadays.

Certainly these new plays have created interest and controversy. What we want to know is, are they any good, or are they just another product of the Shepard PR machine, with that basic fooled American center and periphery, because they have worried, needed a new writer who deals somehow with classic American subject matter in a seemingly orthodox way. Fluffy but recognizable, is what they want.

On the other hand, foreign, not being

continued on page 44

prize to all things American, might find the play a bit flat — even boring.

There is something very old-fashioned about the subject matter of *Black Child* and *Come of the Starving Class*. The idea of these being such a thing as an obligation in your blood was not unknown to the Greeks, — or to O'Neill who tried to make it American, too.

Shepard's quest for identity, for what it is that makes an American, him an American, his obsession now with roots and rootlessness, obligations and walking out, place and homelessness, in a paradise of plenty. That is, the "real" America is beautiful — but the plays are set in poverty, both of spirit and food.

Whatever the form Shepard chooses to work through (they are as related to television drama as Greek drama, or Seinfeld): there's still the element of verbal/visual impression, of spontaneity in the way his characters talk in their frequent monologues. And there's also the extravagant imagery present, except in those naturalistic plays, they are to do with the land, soil, blood, death, not with rock, drugs or science fiction.

For example, there's the live sheep on stage in *Starving Class*, dead at the end, and the field of plenty on back of the horse in *Black Child*.

This field, from where Tilden obtains an abundance of corn, carrots and where the dead child is buried, is a Field of Plenty, a good example of the forceful but not exactly clean imagery in these later plays.

What is this field, which only Tilden can "see" and "work"? What does it represent? The fecund land, hope, a very future in Richard Gilman's statement? What is its relationship to the murdered baby, Tilden's niece? Is the exhumation of the baby the real future, the flow in the blood?

Like so much of the imagery this is not (unintentionally or not) completely worked out — it is a kind of spontaneous, emblematic image, one that stands for a set of concerns, a knowledge of *Elizabetan* of the Greeks and O'Neill, a probe from on the surface of the story.

It's the same with the food imagery in *Starving Class*, the empty fridge, chickens, anchovies, lamb (blood of the) glutony.

These Shepardian flashes, from a child of Southern California, (Raymond Chandler, Nabokov, Hollywood, the cutting edge of the world) are in these two plays somehow muddled with the Woody Guthrie, Midwestern, Archie Barker, marginal Americans from New York and California — again not a thoroughly worked-out complete image, but a kind of soup of flashes.

The plays operate on the edge between complete banality and something really resonant, striking.

Where you stand depends a bit on where you stand in regard to America, and things

American. There are not plays from an English or European sensibility, they are a Gothic Americana, owing as much to rhythms and concerns of American cultural discoveries like jazz and rock, TV and movies, plenty and poverty as God or psychoanalysis.

Roger Pulver's productions are marked by terrific performances and a clear idea of how to present the texts. Pulver lets all the rhythms flow, gives space for the monologues, plays the comedy where it exists, and doesn't shrink from making the most of the extravaganzas, the over-the-top moments with sleep, blood, broken bottles, explosions.

Best of all he has obtained from the actors, all of them, single minded performances, where despite occasional excess trouble, each character has a single face and stays with it for the whole production.

I especially admired the work of Gary Fite, Maggie Muller and Peter Hooking.

A word on the design. These plays offer the designer a choice between Norman Rockwell and Edward Hopper. You can fill the stage with a prop collector's dream of appropriate tat, or you can allow the words and actors to operate as real, yet emblematic, evocative voices, concentrating visually on the singular images Shepard has put in there, like the sheep live and dead, corn, shivers heads and the like. Corrigan and Pulver have rightly put their big ideas in a throne-like temple of words that do not obstruct, yet set the scene in the timeless America between the Rockies and the Mississippi.

Come of the Starving Class and *Black Child* by Sam Shepard, Playhouse Theatre, Adelaide Festival and Melbourne, The Opened March, 1982.

Director, Roger Pulver, Design, Peter Corrigan, Stage Manager, Robert Gibson, Cost Peter Hooking, Maggie Muller, Markie Waynes, David Whigley, Gary Fite, Brian Wilson, Howard Stanley (Production)

After Bausch and Berkoff

AS WE ARE

AS YOU LIKE IT

RAMONA

DEATH IN THE FAMILY

TRAM SHOW

by Suzanne Spinner

Acidities and tense theatre comparisons in Melbourne will seem to be rising from the

combined assault of Steven Berkoff and Peter Bausch.

First the famous Londoner arrived and told us all that he was terribly put out to find that Australian theatre had/his learnt anything since his last visit five years ago, and then in *The Fall of the House of Usher* showed us that he had/his either, but at least he was well angry, unlike other English playwrights he could mention and did. . . . Then Peter Bausch hit us, and she had the gall to call it 1983 and we thought it was 1982, and maybe Berkoff was right and in Australia's still 1977, and anyway, wasn't she obsessive and boring?

And in between the papers were full of the Adelaide Festival and how David Hare would show us what political theatre was all about, and even if it wasn't very theatrical it was socially "engaged" and it had cost a fortune so we'd better take it seriously. . . . And Pender was telling us that the Globe Soap had reinvented comedy, so we'd better laugh — and Patrick White had written a new play and nobody seemed sure whether it was significant or merely interesting, but it was certainly mythic.

Meanwhile we all forgot what we knew, that it was 1982 and that the Mill Theatre Company, the Dorcas Exchange, Les Ties Rangelands, Circus Oz, Stephen Sewell, John Rosewell or at least some, and were still, around even if we can't quite claim their work yet, still all they're really local and good forced might be provincial, never mind Soho and Wuppertal.

Back on the farm things are looking a bit grim now that there are effectively only three companies operating — MTC, Playbox and Androl and a plethora of one-offs, the competition is hardly vigorous.

MTC jumps along with a co-run of Beverly Dunsen's afternoon and unpretentious one-woman show drawn from documents from Australian history and literature, pleasant and solid, full of heart but lacking theatrical imagination for these inventors, and *Minor Nihilist's* production of *As You Like It* is guaranteed to turn down of students off theatre but alone Shakespeare.

No doubt if Berkoff returns in 1985 that generation will drag itself away from the latest rock/performance act gig to see him, because anything would have to be better than the parody happening at the Athenaeum. Never have so many minds and hands worked so hard to realize so few ideas — the sheer aplomb of the art and the vulgarity of the music make the *Simon Gallacher Show* look trivial and tame.

Amidst such contrary tensions Anne Scott-Pendlebury's *Celia* and Edwin Hodgson's *Jaguar* show with intelligence and life, but the fact that they seemed to know what they were doing may have had something to do with the fact that these characters expressly consented to and defined the main text of the play, which was surely in need of doing, but hardly in the way

Shakespeare attended

Given that *Amahl* is hell bent on an exploration of Wagnerian Eaten-communism, and the words on the stage aren't really the ones because it's all about "extraordinary visual images", which is shared in much as the natives could be expected to understand — colour and movement, the way in all too clear for the Playbox to study comp here with artistic direction intact on a combined ticket of new Australian work and intelligent readings of overseas work.

La Manna is again proving its value as a try-out place for committed theatre artists — be they writers, directors or actors — the quality is evident but each new show is so different that inevitably there is a sense of discovery and exploration as some foot La Manna's production of *Amahl* and the *White Slave* by Caroline Wright, George F. Walker showcased a young director and a writer unknown in Australia.

The production was characterised by a clear and sharply realised directorial vision, and excellent performances from this increasingly large corps of fringe actors who are either working or unemployed in the downtown theatre. It was exciting to see actors as sensitive and polished as Jillian Murray and Ian Scott being challenged by a play that demanded the complete fusion of visual and performance style, and which *Dumbbrock* achieved.

By contrast Edwin Bart's production of Colin Ryan's *A Break in the Family* — a naturalistic, modern melodrama of mother and daughter murderers — failed to shade and reflect the aesthetic wit of Ryan's writing despite good performances by Jillian Murray and Susan Hughes. Bart's direction lacked style and a sense of purpose and relied on easily achieved moments of violence and humour. The technique of the design looked even worse compared to *Dumbbrock*'s meticulous aesthetic and gave the lie to the excuse of poor, low budget theatre.

Outside of the CBD — community theatre is going ahead, with the Murray River Performing Group's production of *Liquid Amber* — Jack Hibbard's sequel to *Beachside*, an audience participation play set in a Golden Wedding Anniversary party in the Eastern Suburbs Theatre Works' contribution to Public Transport Theatre, *Swimming Alone* *By Train*, originally planned to run during the Moonrise fortnight, is now into its second extended season.

Like the County Cafe's long-running *Star show*, *Swimming Alone* *By Train* takes place outside a theatre, on the No 42 train running from Moon Albert to the city and back. Both shows not only take theatre out to people, they make theatre out of the everyday environment. Writer Paul Davies and director Mark Sharratt have created a complete event that is more than just being

on a train with a group of actors.

The event they have created, like real-life, has a metaphysics of focus and the script is only a part of it, what really is it, what is of interest is the absorption of the boundaries between theatre and life. Was that a "real" commuter who got on at that last stop or was it an actor? How do you tell? Is that plain clothes policeman really trying to stop the show — and do I really have to show my ticket to that maniac who says I'm the inspector? The *Bus and Train* shows have done more for the public transport lobby than Travelcard ever could, and on some created original, genuinely popular theatre.



Beverly Dunn in *MTC's As We Are*, *Edwin Hodgeman* (Jaguar) and *Gerry*

As We Are (MTC) by Shakespeare, Melbourne Theatre Company, Melbourne Theatre Company March 11, 1982
Director: Edwin Hodgeman, Set Design: Richard French
Costumes: Judith Goble, Lighting: James Green
Cast: Gary Day, Raymond Kays, Bruce Young, James Wright, Ross Williams, Anne Scott, Presbury, Sandy Gurn, David Robertson, Peter Brown, William Smith, Ross Williams, Richard French, Philip Pope, Peter Green, James Wright, Robert Evans, Edwin Hodgeman, Shanda Green, Catherine Pratt.
(Performance)

Amahl and the White Slave by George F. Walker, La Manna Theatre, Melbourne, Opened Feb 18, 1982
Director: La Manna Theatre, Set Design: David Mayes, Lighting: Cliff Keefe
Cast: Barbara, Jillian Murray, Coco 'We're Not' Midget, Ian Scott, Glenis, Jay Dumas, Leslie, Ann Phelan, Pamela, Tony Richards
(Performance)

A Break in the Family by Colin Ryan, La Manna Theatre March 11, 1982
Director/Director: Edwin Bart, Lighting: Robert Hall, Stage Manager: Elizabeth Caplan
Cast: Claudia, Catherine Wilson, Mrs. Brown, Jillian Murray, Mr. Brown, Susan Hughes, Tony Taylor, Mark Williams
(Performance)

W.A.

A master class in acting

HOUSE GUEST

VIRGINIA WOOLF G & S SPECIAL

by Margot Luke

Few audiences had a choice of plays about guests, each with a strong celebrity from Hollywood. And there the simplicity ended. Frances Dursbridge's "mash his thimble" as the program called it, starred Patrick Murney, of the late lamented *Arrogant* series, whilst Virginia Woolf gave us yet another chance to marvel at the fact that Warren Marshall is an astonishingly good actor, who happened to be identified with a character called Alf Gurner for some years.

House Guest is exactly like every other Dursbridge thriller of the past forty odd years into the lives of a modestly famous or moderately rich couple comes some sort of invasion, usually in the shape of blackmail or kidnapping or both. There is much telephoning, and off-stage there is always a cottage in the country where something real and mysterious is happening. People apparently masquerade as someone they are not, at least one character is hanged off on stage, and there are lots of totally unexplained surprises. The whole thing is held together by dialogue that flickers with meaning from which never quite amounts to wit.

The setting for these privileged systems has to be ultra-glossy, and here Gene Dursbridge's set of bland colours and restrained status symbols hits the nail right on the head. The women wear elegant and expensive-looking clothes.

With the kind of one-dimensional character who people a Dursbridge thriller the skill called wit is performance rather than Acting. Murney is at his best when he is scolding up the debauched man-of-the-world type we have come to associate with him. He is somewhat heavier than our stonemason him, but his voice has an impressive resonance that my television set certainly never allowed to escape.

Rosemary Barr shines as her glamorous actress wife, managing to inject some genuine warmth into the scenes of maternal concern and grief, whilst both Polly Law and Sher Gold valiantly struggle with the task of being red herrings, albeit very decorative ones. Raymond Daparc and Harry Davies do a nice double-act as an

W.A. continued

Inspector and his over-educated Sergeant, who turn into a couple of altogether different characters, and Margaret Ford is a visiting cousin, playfully bawling in where enough fair to tread. Leslie Wright, also, disappears much too early from the proceedings — he makes such a good villain.

There are plenty of arguments that this sort of thing is done better and more successfully on television — and yet, the large audience was clearly enjoying things, which proves that live theatre doesn't have to be the sole preserve of the "fairs".

The general reaction to the announcement that the Playhouse was offering *Albert's Wife's Aford of Virginia Wood*, was an enthusiastic "what — again?" How often has one seen it? And of course there was this film. So, more than ever, the interest centred on the cast. Under Rodney Fisher's direction the four players revealed the play, so that one seemed to be seeing it for the first time.

Melba Noun as Martha, the frustrated academic wife, is quite simply stunning. Her brokenness glitters, her vulgarities are funny and pardonable, and her maudlin alcoholic scenes suggest vulnerability to a heart-breaking degree. After this, one really won't want to see the play again done in any other way.

As George, Warren Mitchell plays muted cells to her wails. It is a subtle and restrained underplaying of the part, full of energies just below the surface. His comic irony is all the more cutting, and in his great scenes — the anecdote of the boy who killed his parents, or the announcement of the fatal telegram — he creates dramatic tensions almost surreptitiously. The scenes of the marital war-pieces between the two have the vigour and precision of Wobleson scenes. It's a master class in acting.

The "other couple" have a lot to live up to. Dennis Schultz, too often seen in minor roles, plays the wheedled biology lecturer with more than feathery-two arrogance — he grows from the socially embarrassed young newcomer to the panting younger man with a future, to drunken giggles and turbulence with all the stages in between. As the characterless Mopsy, his came-out wife, Pauline Hood probably starts being appalling too early, not leaving herself room to grow, but her agonised outburst, when the violently undernourished shee has husband has betrayed intimate secrets, carries genuine force.

In the twenty years since the play first appeared on live become familiar with "the game people play", and it is now almost



Terry Johnson and Voyce in the G & S Special at the Hole.

unbelievable that the critics of the time found the relationships, particularly the wife-believe son, unacceptable. The play remains surprisingly fresh and vigorous, even though it has now moved from the outer limits of the "experimental" to an almost comfortable middle of the road.

More over, middle-of-the-road entertainment was offered by the Hole-in-the-Wall with the *Gilbert and Sullivan Special*, devised by John Milton and directed by Barry Scrimgeour. Loosely strung together with a commentary delivered by the singers, it tells the story of G and S partnering with an emphasis on the songs rather than on the personalities.

The production has verve and charm. There is no attempt to present the songs in the context of the specific opera, but rather to re-stage them in entertaining numbers in their own right. Thus the lovely number of HMS Pinafore is costed by three claspily chappies in bowlers, who are ironically the male contingent of an excellent musical concert called Voyce (three men, two women) who in addition to the Savoy Operas have a repertoire of Victorian songs and madrigals.

Leading lady of the show is Terry Johnson, whose range encompasses opera and musicals, but who has achieved a special place in the G and S scene. She sings with passion ("A Simple Sailer") and with flamboyant charm in the love duets with James Makelzie. Makelzie himself is most moving in "I have a song to sing O", and

very funny in the patter songs from *Trial by Jury* and *Pirates of Penzance*.

The idea of backing two leading singers with a versatile and fanciful group who are equally at ease in well-choreographed dancing seems quite inspired, and the total effect is that of a much "larger" show — in retrospect it seems almost surprising that the musical accompaniment is provided by a single piano, played by Les Hayward who seems indelible.

Henry Gilbert by Frances Burbridge. Royal Theatre, Perth. Opened March 22, 1982.
Director, Neil Mary; Designers, Anne Handford; Cost: Verna Woodard, Polly Lane; Jane Stevens; Stage Guild, Sally Drury. Recumbent Barry, Robert Drury, Patrick Mearns, Chris, Leslie Wright; Depressor, Robert, Raymond (Depressor), Robert Clayton, Barry Davidson, Dennis, Mopsy, Margaret Ford, Philip Henderson, Peter Gaskin.
Professional

A Gilbert and Sullivan Special, Hole-in-the-Wall Theatre. Opened March 11, 1982.
Terry Johnson and James Makelzie, accompanied by Voyce/ (Clara) Pinafore, Peter Richard, Jill Shaw, Andrew Fairs, Richard Newman. Pinafore, Les Hayward. Depressor directed by John Milton, directed by Barry Scrimgeour.
Professional

Wife's Aford of Virginia Wood by Edward Albert. Maudslayi Theatre, Perth, Playhouse. Opened March 22, 1982.
Director, Rodney Fisher; Designers, Karen Nelson, Lindsay; Dancers: Vicki, Sally, Mopsy, Richard Hartley. Cost: Melba Noun, Warren Mitchell, Pauline Hood, Dennis Schultz.
Professional

Theatre Guide



ACT

ANU ARTS CENTRE (494787)

Australian National Playwrights Conference. Artistic Director: George Whalley. Annual workshop of new Australian plays and only national Theatre Forum. May 2-18

FOOLS GALLERY THEATRE COMPANY (466092)

Original Sin devised by the company, director, Carol Woodrow. Third play in the series: Images from the Background. To May 1. Original show by Jo Fleming and Tony Cox. May 5-15

JISSA THEATRE COMPANY (470781)

Hum by the company. Touring pre-schools. Slaughter by the company. Touring primary schools. Throughout May

PLATYHOUSE (494488)

Blue Fox Community Arts present Fred's Shed. A school holiday production in association with the Canberra Theatre Trust. May 8-12

THEATRE 3 (474222)

Canberra Repertory Society present A Flea in Her Ear by George Bernard Shaw, director, Allen Harvey. Starts May 15. For serious contact: Marguerite Wells. 06 855453

NSW

THE ALMOST MANAGING COMPANY (307211)

Bondi Pavilion Theatre. Lonely Lenny Lower by Barry Dickson, director, Rex Gramphorn. Throughout May

CAPITOL THEATRE (213445)

The Tommy Sheels Show. To May 8

ENSEMBLE THEATRE (8258877)

Old World by Alexander Arbuzov, director, Hayes Gordon, designer, Yoshi Tsao, with Diana Greenlee and Don Reid. To May 15

GRIFFIN THEATRE COMPANY (333817)

Stables Theatre. The Cinderella Syndrome by Gailge Cronin, director, Peter Connolly, designer, Kerry McArthur. Australian premiere season about the inner workings of the Secret Service. Throughout May

HUNTER VALLEY THEATRE COMPANY (049/363325)

Playhouse. Macbeth by William

Shakespeare, director, Anne Neume, with Ralph Cottrell and Natalie Bate. To May 8. Forget-Me-Not Lanes by Peter Nicholas. Starts May 14

KIRRIBILLI PUB THEATRE (921415)

The Buccaneer Show by Ken Mathieson and Steve Johnson, music by Adrian Morgan, producer, Bill Young, with Zoe Barlow, Allan Chapple, Moya McCris and Tony Martin. Throughout May

HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE (2123411)

They're Playing Our Song by Neil Simon, director, Phil Cusack, with Jacki Weaver and John Waters. Throughout May

MARIAN STREET THEATRE (466166)

Night and Day by Tom Stoppard, director, Terence Clarke, with Carol

Raye. To May 15

MARIONETTE THEATRE OF AUSTRALIA (20588)

Drama Theatre, SOH. Smiles Away by Richard Bradshaw. Children's show May 10-22. General MacArthur in Australia by Roger Pulvers, director, Richard Bradshaw

MUSIC LOFT THEATRE (9776685)

Lofomania devised, written and directed by Peggy Mortimer, with Enzo Toppino and Peggy Mortimer. Throughout May

NIOA (8633815)

Parade Theatre. Camino Real by Tennessee Williams, director, Richard Cottrell. Starts May 12.



NIMROG THEATRE (8995033)

Upstairs. The Suicide by Nicholas Erdman, director, Aubrey Melior, designer, Richard Roberts, with Peter Carroll, Angela Punch-McGregor and Carole Skinner. To May 8

The Struggle of the Naga Tribe by Randa director, Chris Johnson, with Cathy Downes and Barry Otto. Starts May 12

Downstairs. Demolition Job by Gordon Graham, director, Anna Volska, with Harold Hopkins, Rob Steele and John Stone. To May 18

New Sky devised and performed by Judith Anderson with original music by Carl Vine. Starts May 21. York Theatre Seymour Centre. Candide by Leonard Bernstein and Stephen Sondheim, director, John Gail, designer, Roger Kirk, with Philip Quest, Jon Ewing and Beidre Rubenstein. Throughout May

NSW THEATRE OF THE DEAF (3571266)

Theodora and The Communication Show for primary schools and Signposts in History for secondary schools, director, Ian Watson. Throughout May

PHILIP STREET THEATRE (2328570)

The Anniversary by Bill McIlwraith, director, Peter Williams, with June Satter, Alan Wilson, Zoe Barlow, John Hamblin, Malcolm Thompson and Belinda Giblin. Into May. God's Favourite by Neil Simon, director, Peter Williams. Starts end May

O THEATRE (047/285253)

Safety in Numbers by Philip Scott and Luke Hardy, director and designer,



Theatre Guide

Arthur Banks Starts May 18

REGENT THEATRE (2847944)

Barram by Cy Coleman, Michael Stewart and Mark Bramble, director and choreographer, Bayson Lee, musical director, Noel Smith, with Reg Livermore. Throughout May

SHOPFRONT THEATRE FOR

YOUNG PEOPLE (5813946)

Weekend workshops include playbuilding, mime, dance, puppetry design, radio and video. Youth Theatre Showcase: Roméo and Juliet adapted by Ennii Gray, director, Kingston Anderson. May 1, 7, and 8

STUDIO SYDNEY (7713333)

People Are Living There by Alvin Fagard, director, Graham Correy, with Leila Blake. To May 9. Seascape by Edward Albee, director, Graham Correy, with Leila Blake and Ann Roy. Starts May 27

SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY

(3584399)

Drama Theatre, SOH. A Map of the World by David Hare, director, David Hare, designers, Eamon D'Arcy and Hayden Griffin, with Roshan Seth, Robert Grubb, Sheila Scott-Wilkinson, Penne Downe, Peter Whitford and Tim Robertson. To May 8

Theatre Royal. Amadeus by Peter Shaffer, director, Richard Wharmist, designers, John Stoddart and Anne Frieder, with John Gaden, Grev Forsythe, Linda Cropper, Robert Hughes, Terry Blaser, Ric Hutton, Rhys McConnochie and Ron Hackett. To May 23

THEATRE SOUTH (042/312663)

Diggers: Darko by Michael Smart, director, Des Davis. Opens June 4. Tech College Theatre. Woolfonging. For entries contact Carole Long on 929-3010/327 1203.

QLD

ARTS THEATRE (382344)

The Tower by Hal Porter, director, Josephine Debenham. Porter's 1963 costume melodrama of the 1850's. To May 32

The Emperor's New Clothes, director, Len Crook. Children's theatre production. Throughout May

HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE (2212777)

House Guard by Francis Durbridge, director, Val May, with Patricia McNeil and Rosamary Barr. To May 22

LA BOITE THEATRE (361632)

The Venetian Twins by Nick Enright and Terry Clarke, director, Malcolm Playlock. To May 15



Winning Late For Nothing by David Pyle and Tony Longland, director, Des James. To May 27

NEW MOON THEATRE COMPANY

(07/731913)

No Orphans For Miss Blandish by Robert David MacDonald, director, Terry O'Connell. Thinker with a difference, based on the novel by James Hadley Chase. Townsville Civic Theatre. To May 6. Mackay Theatre Royal, May 7 & Rockhampton Pitcairn Theatre. May 12-15

QUEENSLAND THEATRE COMPANY

(2215777)

The Warzone by John Upton, director, Gregory Gessch. Comedy of local party politics

TN COMPANY (3325133)

Antigone by Sophocles, director, Rod Wristler. Group devised production based on the classical Greek tragedy. To May 15

For entries contact Janany Rodgerman on 3772619

SA

LIGHTHOUSE (515151)

Playhouse, Festival Centre. A Midsummer Night's Dream by William Shakespeare, director, Jim Sharran, designer, Sue Blane, lighting designer, Nigel Lavinia, composer, Sarah de Jong, with Geoffrey Rush and Gillian Jones. A magical celebration of the power of love. May 7-15

Q THEATRE (2236651)

When we are Married by J.D. Prentley, director, Jean Marshall. April 16-May 15

SACW PHOENIX YOUTH THEATRE

(2723936)

Theatre 62. The Inescribable Act of Arturo Ui by Bertold Brecht, director, June Barnes. May 25-May 29

THE STAGE COMPANY (2336283)

The Space Theatre. A Night in the

Arms of Rehearsal by Clem Gorman, director, John Noble, with Sue Jones, Don Barker, David Huesthouse, John Heywood and Rob George. A bodge gang of the 50's gets together again in the 80's. May 13-29

TROUPE (2717552)

Troupe Theatre, Old Urley Town Hall. Death Orange by Ron Hoisinger and Jan Firman, director, Richard Collins. The Vietnam Tragedy ten years on. May 27-June 19

For entries contact the Association of Community Theatres on 267 5555

TAS

POLYGON THEATRE COMPANY

(348018)

The Elephant Man by Bernard Pomeroy, director, Ken Campbell-Gibbs. Touring Uni Studio Theatre, May 14-22. TCAE Theatre, Launceston, May 28-29

SALAMANCA THEATRE COMPANY

(326259)

Anna's Coming Out devised by Richard Dawley, Jude McHenry, Mary McEwen and Fiona Stewart, director, Richard Dawley. Woodstock devised and directed by Les Winspear. Forests by David Allen, director, Margaret Davis. Touring schools throughout May

TERRAPIN PUPPET THEATRE

(248888)

Tanglefoot by Sandy McCutcheon, director, Sandy McCutcheon, designer, Jenni Davidson. A play written especially to celebrate the Year Of The Tree. The story of a group of trees' struggle to avoid being chopped down. Touring schools on the north-west coast throughout May. For entries contact Jon Fogarty on 30 8022

VIC

AUSTRALIAN NOUVEAU THEATRE

(695 5303)

Overtones. End Bytchenov in Las Caraceras by La Bruyere. In English. April 29 - May 1

Schedenhard written and directed by Paul Adin. An apocalyptic musical. May 12-June 12

Ahead of Time-Itinerary. An hour's animated and juxtaposed narrative devised and directed by Nigel Triffitt. Handspan's children's show. Jendy Malone and the 9 O'clock Tiger. May 8-21. 7-12 year olds

ARENA THEATRE (2461937)
Booze: A 4th continues tour of secondary schools
Backwater devised by the company and directed by Andy Lemon. Suitable for Year 9

Woolsey devised and directed by Peter Charlton, touring schools all over Victoria. Suitable for Years 4-6

THE COMEDY CAFE BYO THEATRE RESTAURANT (H183889)

SKIDS — a high speed night on the town with Robyn Gies, Mike Bishop and Rob Meadows. All through May
BANANA LOUNGE (Upstairs) New Bus show with Rod Quantock

COMEDY THEATRE (H823333)

One Mo. Time written and directed by Yvonne Baggett. Great New Orleans musical based on the black vaudeville lyric theatre of New Orleans (1925)

LA MAMA (3476088)

Includes works by Samuel Beckett, Toshi Lyostyis, Stella Tarnant and Maude Clarke

LAST LAUGH THEATRE RESTAURANT (4186325)

International Comedy Festival: The Brass Band, just returned from America. April 18-May 1
Los Trice Ringbarkus, Hot Bagels, Alan Pentland (return show) May 4-22
Kebos & Curts and Double Take May 25-July 21

MELBOURNE THEATRE COMPANY (H889132)

Athenaeum: As You Like It by Shakespeare, directed by Bruce Myles, with Sandy Gore. March 31-May 2



Russell St. The Flowering World by John Ramey, directed by Graeme Blundell and designed by Peter Corbridge, with Frederick Parlow. April 21-June 19

Athenaeum 2: Narrow Fant by David Knight, directed by William Gluth and designed by Mark Wager

MILL THEATRE COMPANY (H52132318)

Midnights Thurs 7-10pm. Communal activities including music, script, mask making

MIMIClub, Sat 9-11am. Drama and craft for children 8-12 run by Pamela Wood (Woolley Jumper TIE team) & Deakin Uni drama students

MURRAY RIVER PERFORMING GROUP (H5217615)

Flying Fox Fly Circus, Hotel free. Reserve, Albany Bookings-Cinema Centre (086213644). May 12-22

Comedy Week in The Galah Bar. Mark Little, Los Trice Ringbarkus, Dunge Bros. Sat. May 1. Al Ward & Ben Johnson, folk singers 7pm Sat. May 8 & Sun. May 9. Kebos, Curts & Ward, comedy excerpts from Sleep No More. Also plus MHPG Lunatics. May 19-22

Mr PG's Musical Menagerie, available to primary schools May 8-June

Youth Theatre Workshops held during holidays in Wedonga

MUSHROOM TROUPE plus HANDSPAN THEATRE (37613864)

In association with Alexander Theatre present the children's spectacular Bombers at Bakston Theatre

Geelong Performing Arts Centre during school holidays. 10-10am and 1-3pm

PLAYBOX THEATRE COMPANY (H38888)

Upstairs: A Whip Round for Percy Granger by Therese Rado, directed by Rex Crimphorn. May 9-23

Downstairs: Talley's Folly by Lanford

Wilson, directed Murray Copland, with Camilla Gantner and Katherine Ferland. April 22-May 30
For entries contact Susana Foster on 521 4422.

WA

HOLE IN THE WALL (3812460)

I Ought to be in Pictures by Neil Simon, director, Peter Morris, designer, Jake Newby, with Sally Sander, Maure Ogden and Pope Williamson. Starts April 28

OCTAGON THEATRE (3882440)

Mason Miller present: As You Like It and King Lear by William Shakespeare, designed and directed by Ray Ormrod. Lighting, Jake Newby with Andy Gray, Pipa Williamson, Rod Hall and Glen Hochspick. To May 15

PLAYHOUSE (3753500)

National Theatre Company present Uncle Vanya by Anton Chekhov, director, Prunella Scales, with Timothy West. To May 22.

Uncle Vanya



PRINCESS MAY THEATRE, Fremantle (3355125)

Writer Theatre present Backyard by Jan Baloda, director, Ross Cole. To May 12

REGAL (3811537)

Inkster and Paul Elliott present Pyramus Tops by Marlowe Green and Ed Ferbert, director, Bill Robertson, with John Inman and Reg Gellam. To May 22

NATIONAL THEATRE COMPANY (3753500)

TIE: Washing Away by David Young. Anne's Coming Out adapted by Rosemary Crossley. Year Nine are Animals by Richard Tulloch. Touring secondary schools in metropolitan, Kalgoorlie and Experiences detects Throughout May

For entries contact Margaret Schwarz on 341 1170



Restaurant Supper Guide

NSW

SUMMIT (2797777)

47th Floor, Australia Square Tower, Sydney. World's largest revolving restaurant. Magnificent 360 degree panoramic views of city and harbour. Live combo plays nightly for dinner and dancing. Free night parking in Basement. Pre-theatre dinners from 8pm. A la carte Mon-Sat, main courses from \$14. Grand Buffet Dinner Mon-Sun, price (from \$17-\$37) includes 1/2 bottle wine per person. Suppers from 10.30pm-midnight Mon-Sat (main charge \$5 per person). Credit cards accepted.

CENTRAL PARK RESTAURANT (3331094)

Terrace level 8, MLC Centre, Sydney. Luxurious garden restaurant right in city centre. An oasis of fresh, pure food, served in an informally elegant atmosphere. By day and sun pours through the tinted domed roof, at night the stars and city lights are above. You can dine here before the show at the Theatre Royal, basement parking available. Pre-theatre dinners served from 5.30pm Mon-Fri.

MARIAN STREET THEATRE (4983166)

3 Marian Street, Kilsnoe. Pre-theatre dinner from 6pm Tues-Sat. Licensed \$15 per head for 3 courses plus tax or coffee. Barbecue. Supper available after the 4.30pm Sunday afternoon performance.

CASSINI'S (2675328)

16-22 Wentworth Avenue, Sydney. Lunch Mon-Fri, dinner and supper Mon-Sat. Licensed. Average \$17. Credit cards accepted. International cuisine served in elegant surroundings. Ideally located for pre-theatre dinners and for late suppers.

Supper specialities include hot or cold platters with a variety of seafood, burrito, gates etc.

BOPPS (3574558)

Cnr Stanley and Yunging Sts. East Sydney. Lunch Mon-Fri, dinner and supper Mon-Sat. Licensed. Credit cards accepted. Average \$22. Long established as one of Sydney's top Italian restaurants with a superb wine list. Kitchen open till 11.30 for supper when you can discuss the evening's performance till 1am.

NIJEUW AMSTERDAM (430985)

418 Pacific Highway, Crows Nest. Dinner and supper Tues-Sat 8pm — 1am. Unlicensed. Credit cards accepted. Average \$12. Dutch chef, Ron, serves seafood and international cuisine. Suppers are their speciality and a large choice of light dishes are available till 1am.

THE CAULDRON (311523)

207 Darlinghurst Road, Darlinghurst. The restaurant features 2 bars, dance floor, disco music, courtyard and open fire in winter. 7.30 to 3am Mon-Sat, 7.30-12.5am Sun. The exclusive, fully licensed restaurant offers superb international cuisine indoors in air-conditioned comfort or under the heated courtyard. Supper is served from 11.12pm every night.

UP STAGE (2675623)

652 George St, Sydney. Stylish surroundings, elegant food well executed and served and stunning theatre in a one-stop entertainment all under one roof. That's the menu at Kun and Lillian Horler's brand new Upstage Theatre Restaurant, which kicks off on April 14. Pre-dinner drinks in the sumptuous piano bar (open 8pm) and dinner from 7.4.30pm, delicious frequently changing menu of

seafood and international cuisine from chefs Darryl Cheval and Ken Michael. Dinner is followed by superb cabaret entertainment starring Geraldine Turner and John O'May with delectable desserts, coffee and liqueurs in the Interval. Piano bar open after the show.

VIC

GALLERY RESTAURANT (4183311)

Hilton Hotel, cnr Wellington Place and Clarendon St, East Melbourne. Licensed. Open 7 days from 7am-11.30pm for casual dining at a popular price. Apart from the house price. Apart from the house specialities they offer both hot and cold suppers for those seeking an after-show venue and even have a weight-watchers section on the menu.

WALNUT TREE (3284406)

451 W Farm Street, Melbourne. Lunch Mon-Fri, dinner Mon-Sat. Licensed. All credit cards. Average \$28. High quality international menu served in delightful surroundings. Let them know if you're on your way to a show and this service will be quick and efficient.

FANNY'S (55533017)

343 Lonsdale St, Melbourne. Lunch Mon-Sat. Licensed. All credit cards. Average \$30. A popular restaurant serving consistently high quality French food. If you love good food and mixing with Melbourne's social set this restaurant is a must.

If you would like your restaurant listed in the **TA RESTAURANT SUPPER GUIDE**, please ring Jaki Gohard with details on 442 8778/356 3066.

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Dancing. From \$5.
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NEW PATRICK WHITE OPERA

Patrick White has been discussing with Carl Vine the possibility of collaborating on a new opera with a contemporary theme. White was impressed with Vine's contribution to *Signal Dance* for the Adelaide Festival, as well as with Vine's other works for the theatre. Various proposals have been presented to Patrick White in the past, but



Carl Vine

have come to nothing. Perhaps with White himself taking the initiative, this time it will happen. White has taken a consistent interest in the contemporary music scene (would that some of our senior composers might do the same) and actually goes to concerts of new music.

CHOREOGRAPHERS GIVE THE LIFT TO AUS MUSIC

Further collaborations in theatre are promoting Australian music in the strongest way. In July, a major music theatre (single-bill) presented by the Seymour Group includes a repeat performance of the Bartley Newburn staged version of *Purrot Louane*, a new production of Scriabin's *Rossini*, produced and directed by Barry Marchant, and a new work, *The Stripes* Ransome, choreographed by Barry Moreland with Kefaua Cox, and other key

dancers from the Sydney Dance Company Brian Howard, whose opera *Inner Peace* (based on Louis Noun's play) was such a success, in composing a score for *The Rainbow Serpent*.

The Sydney Dance Company continues its unmatched interest in Australian music. For the Commonwealth Games in Brisbane in September, Graeme Murphy is preparing a new work to two recent and major scores: Barry Cunningham's *Mirage* and Graeme Koehn's *The Rainbow Forest*, his award-winning composition from the Adelaide Festival. On the same program will be a major new work by Barry Moreland with a new score by Carl Vine. The work, as yet unstarted, is based on the life and works of Daisy Bates. For this work, Moreland has lured the painter Charles Blackman into the theatre as lib, the Blackman has already done some remarkable designs. As an orange-maker Blackman is interpreted in Australia. Such collaborations could herald a new era of energy and achievement in Australian theatre.

FILM MUSIC WORKSHOPS

Seony Walton's Film and Television School is planning to introduce the first of a rolling series of seminars and workshops on Film Music later this year. He feels that with the growth in the numbers and stature of Australian composers, and the developing film and television industry, a realistic workshop continuing over a period of 24 months, must result in a new vitality. Although "albums of the film" are appearing — sometimes with a workable "theme song" — Australia still has not produced a major film score. The last such an attempt at a conference (which lapsed into the inevitable grape and batch session) occurred in the late 'sixties. Could be that a top-flight film composer from Europe or the States could head up the project.

EUROPEAN DREAMTIME

The famous collaboration of top choreographer Jim Kylian and three major composers Anne Nordheim, Toru Takemitsu and Luciano Berio has been postponed.

It is of some interest to Australia in the full-length work is to be based on the world of myths of the Australian Aborigine. The Holland Festival commissioned the work. All participants except Berio (who was born in 1918 for Music Ransome and collapsed by second best dunder) had quickly shipped into Northern Australia in 1960 to observe the local atmosphere. Berio, in doubt, disor-

ientiated himself and has not finished his section, although he says now that it will be ready for next June. I must say it sounds like a strange sort of message.

AUSTRALIAN FOR GREEK FILM

Giulio Helder (no-Norion-Rosen music writer) is in Greece to make the film of her book *The Road To Rembrandt*, now published in English, German and Greek. Since then she has published the major book on Theodorakis, who not only made available to her previously suppressed materials but gave the finished work his blessing at the big launch in Athens. Her book deals in some depth with Theodorakis' early "serious" compositions as well as the unique social and political implications of his popular music.

The Road To Rembrandt film should be a great success with Channel 4/28.

1983 NATIONAL MUSIC CAMP

The next National Music Camp will take place in January, again at King's College, Parramatta, NSW. This venue was most successful for the 1981 camp. Its Director will be the permanent conductor of the Local Philharmonic, Shalom Reedy Rabin. It is expected that there will be public concerts in Sydney by the AYD. The orchestra is now considering offers of European engagements later in the year, and its fame is spreading rapidly. Its 1980 Adelaide Festival Director, Erich Schmidt has been a gracious ambassador for the young orchestra.

HEARING IN DISBELIEF

Last month's article on *The New Composers* (establishment), referred to the "performance art" composers (non-establishment). For a balanced view, the Biennale of Sydney is presenting a major survey of performance art and spirit, devised by William Parker. Spread over much of the period of the Biennale, the main music performances will be at the NSW Commemoration of Music from 3-14 May. This Biennale is the first time an international exhibition of contemporary art has formally included a section concerned with sound. John Cage declined to participate ("I am in principle opposed to performances of recorded music") but Furling still has hopes. Furling adds the famous *Audio Arts* cassette catalogue which includes *Audio Arts*: a cassette sampler of music and performance groups who work and live in Australia.

WHO'S GOT IT? HOW DO YOU GET IT?

James Murdoch surveys the state of Arts Information

It has been said for years that information is the new currency. It is bought and sold. It is coveted and feared.

In the 'seventies, Australia experienced a rapid computer invasion. There was a feeling of getting into the future. There was only minimal grumbling about displaced jobs. Computerisation was chic and new.

The arts were hardly touched by computerisation. Only the major performing arts companies could afford it, usually for accounting purposes. Then along came Compucontact and Buss and everyone became familiar with the new computer type-face. Research and documentation were sporadic and unco-ordinated activities, and a data base of basic information always seemed very low on the list of priorities.

Lots of organisations and persons have wads of information. For instance, the archives of the NSW Conservatorium of Music, the ABC, Musica Viva, the AETT, all have banks of information about their history (which is also our history), but little of it is accessible. And that is a very important and crucial word, accessible. If it is not accessible, it is of no use to you and to me. In many instances it is of no use to the holder of that information either, because it is not documented in a form which they can get at easily. When it is in a form retrievable, it is jealously

guarded and not available. Try asking the ABC for information. Even its poor archive department has to chase its tail for what it has.

It is time to take stock of our activities, and of our needs, in order to sustain and develop them. As the Music Board itself says, "As the artistic activities of a nation grow, accurate documentation and recording become essential."

The newly released Annual Report of the Australia Council (1980-1981) devotes more than half its reporting on its own Council Programs to Arts Information and Research. Coincidentally, the Council has released a report of the Steering Committee on *Arts Information in Australia: The Role of the Australia Council*.

It is extraordinary that in its own report, the Australia Council doesn't seem to acknowledge the huge bank of information it possesses. Each Board maintains its own filing system, related to applications. These files contain reports, facts, figures, opinions, assessments. The problem with many of the Council's staff is that if it is not on file it doesn't exist.

The Council's library is a superb resource, accessible to the public, but under-used. If the Council mobilised its own documentation, immediately the major arts information centre in Australia would be in operation.

The Annual Report noted that the

demand for information about the arts grew and goes on to detail various informational activities within the Council.

- * Arts Information Program
- * Anyplace bi-monthly news digest (6,000 recipients) related to Council grants alone and with special supplements
- * *GEARTS* a guide to arts organisations in Australia
- * Ethnic Arts Director
- * Regional Arts Column
- * Photographic Archive
- * Films about the arts and artists

It also notes two useful research reports: a national study of Australia's attitudes to the arts (commissioned in time to substantiate the Council's expenditure on opera), and an analysis of the economic impact of a regional arts center (Melbourn). But it also notes that "...no general policy existed on the collection and dissemination of arts information throughout Australia."

There is clearly a bias in the thinking of the Council towards information on the arts in statistical data which would be of most interest to arts administrators involved in policy making. This emphasis was also evident in a paper presented by Dr Jean Battersby at the Second Conference of Commonwealth Arts Councils, held in Brisbane a year ago, on the subject of the establishment of an international centre for studies on the arts, and of an international arts

information service.

As one who is vitally concerned with arts information and its transfer (as World President of the Music Information Centres of UNESCO), I think this emphasis is most dangerous, without the balancing data base of real information (as against information about information).

It is too easy for administrators to believe that if they have the information about information, then they automatically have information which hopefully makes them omnipotent.

Without the access of the artist and his audience to a diverse information resource, the whole scene becomes stultified, mysterious and debilitating, as indeed it was until the early 'twenties.

The same limited points of reference continually are recycled. This means in music, that we hear the same sixty pieces of 20th century music, know nothing of the intellectual and artistic life of other countries, are suspicious of, and resist, "the new", and the arts become duller and duller.

Let's take a look at some of the arts information outside the Australia Council.

MUSIC

Of all the arts, music is better provided with accessible information and indeed Australia leads the world in some aspects, through the work of the Australian Music Centre. Its Australian Directory of Music Research was a trail-blazer and is now accompanied in New York. The famous three "R"s of music are:

* RILM *Repertoire International de Littérature Musicale*

* RISM *Repertoire International des Sources Musicales (1800-1800)*

* RIDIM *Repertoire International d'Iconographie Musicale*

RILM is the best organised and is available through its publications or more directly and up-to-date, through MIDAS, the service provided through OTC. MIDAS (Multi-Media International Data Acquisitions Service) was introduced to Australia in 1979, in time to assist the delegates and the President of the International Music Council of UNESCO. With great showmanship, OTC linked up MIDAS to a giant screen. The delegates were invited to request any information from RILM by satellite. One of the distinguished scholars was nominated

and instantly details of his life's work appeared on the screen. He was visibly shaken. His peers were green with envy. The exercise was a great success. It is now possible to achieve the same result from your bedside television set through the home telephone.

The other international resources on music are the publications of the Australian Music Centre (now going again after a year off) and include what one would expect: Catalogues of Australian Compositions, Directory of Music Organisations, bibliography of Australian materials and recordings. In addition the Centre has files on composers, performers, press cuttings, posters etc etc.

All of the above come under the general umbrella of the International Association of Music Libraries.

Elisabeth Silsbury published a Directory of Tertiary Music Institutions in 1978. Late in 1980, the first edition of the Australian Music Directory appeared. Edited by Peter Beilly and Michael Roberts, it is hoped to be an annual publication, and so will expand and fill in some gaps. It has brought together a mass of useful information and is clearly aimed at the industry and commercial music.

The Music Board of the Australia Council has just turned down an application from Theatre Australia to publish a monthly national music magazine, with the limp excuse that it does not believe there exists a market for such an object. There has not existed a national music magazine for some fourteen years, and it is patently time to offer a central organ and platform for the disposal of information which reaches none of the media, and for the serious discussion of major issues, not dealt with by our Mickey Mouse press.

If 10% of the combined subscribers of the ABC, Musica Viva, the AETT, the Australian Opera and the state opera companies, the Australian Ballet, and the members of the 1900 organisations listed in the AMC's Directory, as well as the 100,000 members of the World Record Club, could not support a monthly music magazine, then we should all give up. But a new magazine needs help to get started.

THEATRE

The recognised information centre for theatre is the International Theatre

Institute (ITI) branch in Australia and located at the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust (AETT) in Sydney. It is not large, but contains theatre periodicals, a collection of Australian (and non-Australian) plays without being comprehensive. There is no register of Australian playwrights, such as the Playwright's Conference has attempted to establish.

The Playwright's Conference produced a Catalogue of plays submitted to it over the previous two year period.

CAPPA, now located in Sydney, undoubtedly will assemble a substantial performing arts information base, but cannot contribute anything yet. Each drama company receives plays submitted for possible performance but to my knowledge there is not one company which has consistently documented these. Thank God for Currency Press (which has been publishing incidental music to the plays at the back). Amazingly, there still does not exist a single recording of an Australian play, but it is even more incredible that there is no single office which has a repository of all the Australian plays. The University of Queensland plans to press all published and unpublished Australian plays and to compare the result. Let's hope the plays aren't thrown away afterwards, and that a Readers Digest mentality prevails once again.

And finally, *Theatre Australia* itself, since August 1976, is a most accessible and well-documented source of performing arts information, and most detailed than the *Performing Arts Year Book of Australia* (b 1976) which has usually given in nature and now includes 25 categories of declassification.

DANCE

Dance has increased its documentation greatly over the last year, and much of it may still be generally unknown. There are five basic areas:

1. The two books by Edward Park on Ballet in Australia, which are mostly a recital of events interspersed with bibliography and finances, but include most useful Chronology, Bibliography, Index of Stage Works and General Index. To this add Frank Sabor's superb book on Borovansky, for the favour of the period as well as a different index. John Coughlin's book *Opera and Ballet in Australia* also has a

useful index although the homespun text is a hazard.

2 The Dramatic Music Catalogue of Australian Composers, which lists the bulk of the dance works which have used Australian music.

3 Company programmes, which have not been systematically deposited anywhere. The AMC established dance files in 1975 and these include comprehensive press cuttings. The Dennis Wolanski Library and Archives of the Performing Arts has substantial documentation, and probably today is the major documentation centre for the performing arts in Australia. The archival centre at the Victorian Arts Centre, is impressive already for what it has achieved but the Wolanski library at the Sydney Opera House has a ten year lead and magnificent coverage. The Performing Arts Collection of South Australia, formed in 1978, also has ambitious plans for documenting the activities of South Australia.

4 The most comprehensive document on Dance in Australia is the recently published *Theatre Board Support for Professional Dance* as an Occasional Paper by the Australia Council. Its indexes will stand for some time as the definitive documentation.

5 The Australian Archives of the Dance, which belong to the Australian Ballet, and which were created by Edward Pank.

LITERATURE

The Australia Council has published a *Bibliography of Australian Books* which is useful. It was prepared by Prof Lesane Kramer as a representative selection of Australian literature currently (1979) available, and was intended mainly for overseas use. It also has a select list of Australian Children's Literature, prepared by Margaret Ingham. Then there are the various author's associations: Australian Society of Authors, with nearly 2,000 members, the Fellowship of Australian Authors, with 3-4,000, and the most exclusive and professional Australian Writers' Guild, with some 5-600 members. By shopping around these organisations might be able to supply detailed information.

FILM

One of the first countries of the mark to establish a film industry was Australia. Fortunately, no renaissance over the last decade has been accompanied by supportive resource and documentation centres.

The Film Library at the Australian National Library is the major single source. Every two years it issues *Australian Film*, a listing of all films made in Australia. Film Australia has a catalogue as well, and the Australia

Council film division (run by Peter Campbell) keeps track of arts films and operates an archival program.

Each of the states has a resource centre (and a catalogue) which usually includes a State Film Library (scarcely all these are to be brought together in Victoria and will be called Film Victoria — surely all the other states will have to follow suit). Victoria also has the George Lugg Archive.

Each state Education Department has film in its resource centre. Other basic publications are the *Film and TV Year Book*, *Cinema Papers*, AFT's *Film News*, and the AMC's Catalogue of Australian Film Music.

Between them, the National Library, State Film Libraries, AFC, AFI, Film and TV School should have the game sewn up for information on Australian film. Enquire at your local.

The Australia Council's report on Arts Information specifies that 576 collections were surveyed, 133 major and 343 general collections. Finally, the report was confined to the results of the survey of 133 major respondents.

It is clear that many of these hold information which is not available, or not available for sharing and the next crucial step is for the Australia Council to fund the co-ordination of information sharing networks. Without this step, so much of the work will be unnecessarily duplicated.

Although the above run-down may seem impressive compared to what was available only ten to fifteen years ago, it is not good enough when one considers the arts in terms of practitioners and consumers, and in terms of money invested in the arts industry, conservatively estimated at \$1213 million in 1977 by the Report of the Study Group for Private Support for the Arts, convened by the Myer Foundation.

No commercial industry would dare proceed with so little research, documentation and information.

Where is the initiative to come from?

While the Australia Council may fund, it is unlikely to initiate. The options are few.

- * Australian National Library
- * AFTT
- * CAPPA

* A consortium of existing national and international organisations.

If these working in the arts want information, then they must demand it, collect it, share it, and budget for it.



Sydney Philharmonia Society presents -

MOSTLY MOZART

with Romola Costantino (piano), Glynnis Fowles (soprano),
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C.P.E. Bach Magnificat

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House Box Office (phone 2 0588) and agencies, or from Sydney
Philharmonia Society, c/o York and Jamison Sts, City (phone 29 4476)

* courtesy of The Australian Opera.

LIVING DANGEROUSLY

Not everything went terribly well for the cast and crew of *The Year of Living Dangerously* in the Philippines and their stay was curtailed. James McElroy is the producer, Peter Weir the director, Russell Boyd the cinematographer and Mel Gibson, Sigourney Weaver and Michael Murphy the stars of Christopher Koch's story, which is fully financed, and will be marketed worldwide, by MGM. The Philippines, as other productions have found, are a bit tricky as location sites. Less adventurously, John Daigan's *Far Star* location shots were done in Manila, where everyone is terribly helpful.

HIGH NAMES APPEAR

Big names keep appearing in the official, or government, or bureaucratic sections of the film industry. Sir James Callaghan, whose interests are newspapers and television in Western Australia, is a new part-time commissioner. Another part-timer is Mr Ray Beattie whose interests are in technology and marketing.

AFC CREATIVITY

The Australian Film Commission responded so gleefully to more money to be allocated to its Creative Development Branch by stating that it loved the CDB and would do anything to support it, that it couldn't help cutting the funding because Governments can't want's revolution, and it has asked for

more money in 1982/83 specifically for CDB. Which is about where everybody came to.

AUS FILM MONTH

It was Australian film month in Washington from mid-March to mid-April with 13 films shown in the American Film Institute Theatre in the Kennedy Center. Among the films, *Don't Party*, *The Odd Angry Shot*, *The Cause of Jimmy Blacksmith*, *The Picture Show Man* and *Coolie* (two nights each), *March to March* and *Mad Max* in a double bill because, says the Institute's Director, these are "real movies", and *The Effect of One Dream* which is expected to be the cultural highlight. Meanwhile *Breaker Morant* is still showing commercially in Washington, as well as London.

DEVELOPMENT DOLLARS

Arne Beskowbank's *Archer* and William Nagle's *Leonie* got \$6000 and \$10,000 respectively for third draft funding from the AFC, and Adams Packer Pty Ltd the sum of \$120,000 to develop a package of six projects, in line with its reputation as the company that never sleeps. I guess *Leonie* from Nagle, whose novel of the same name was made into a film called *The Odd Angry Shot*, will be about that legendary American serviceman called Leonie in Melbourne during World War II who killed Melbourne as well as Japanese. He was also noted for passing tomato sauce on his coat sleeves.

WATCH FOR THESE...

ABSENCE OF MALICE expresses America's worry about its very free press. Sally Field plays a deliriously inept, though attractive and ambitious, reporter who fits a man into her story to suit her theories, and damages him. No Australian editor would let her story into the pages of his newspaper. Disregarding this, the film is well-made, interesting and has Paul Newman as the victim.

NEEDS does not have a lot to do with the Bolshevik revolution or Jack Reed's book, *Ten Days That Shook the World*, about his participation but it is interesting to watch Warren Beatty producing, directing, and playing Reed. Diane Keaton should go back to Woody Allen, who prints is on her not to stretch.

In one of the best scenes in the film Jack Nicholson acts everybody else off the screen.

WHOSE LIFE IS IT ANYWAY? is the film of the controversial, and very moving, play about the sculptor paralysed from the neck down in a car accident who does not want to not in hospital when he could just slip off the life support machine and go wherever it is people go. The film is not a plea for euthanasia, just for the individual's right not to live. The victim is well but, perhaps too smartly played, by Richard Dreyfuss, with John Cazale as a doctor-boss of the hospital. Packed with good lines and a remarkable small performance from Kenneth McMillan as a just judge.

HEATWAVE, of course. It's a very Sydney kind of film, with an immediate performance by Judy Davis, closely followed by Genevieve Blieden as the lady who got in the way of the developer.

TRUE CONFESSIONS if it's getting the list together before the Oscars but surely this one will pick up a clutch of awards? If not, there's no justice! is one of the most fascinating, professional films from the US in the past five years, with a brilliant script, direction and acting not only from Robert de Niro and Robert O'Neill but from the entire cast. A model movie.



March to March — filled with *Mad Max* as cult service.

PICKING A WINNER



SIGRID THORNTON talks to Elizabeth Riddell

Every now and again a reviewer likes to publicly pick a winner, and this is just what I feel like doing in the case of Sigrid Thornton, who at the age of 23 plays Jessica Harrison in *The Man From Snowy River*. As soon as she had done her duty by the producers for the premiere, Sigrid took off for three months in Europe, let the offers of work fall where they might. It is her first real break in ten years of small and middle roles in television and film in which she was hardly noticed. *The Man* gave her a chance to be seen for the natural beauty she is, in competition with the changing moods of the High Country, to show childish sweetness and uncertainty, flashes of sunny humour and brooding fear of rejection, all of which she gave to the role.

The day I met Sigrid she was wearing a bright blue jumpsuit and nervously smoking too much. "It's because I'm going away," she said.

"I'm so excited. I've been working since I was 13. In fact when I was seven, and we were living in London — my father and mother are university lecturers — I joined the Unicorn Theatre Club, a children's group that was supposed to get kids interested in the theatre. With me, it worked."

"I've played in every kind of television series — *Murdoch Mysteries*, *Masada*, *Devotion*, *Fear*, *Father Dear Father* and in three films where I don't think I was noticed — *The Gearing of Freedom*, *FY Holden*, and *Snapshots*, a thriller Simon Winchester made."

"I spent six years with the Twelfth Night Theatre Company in Brisbane, but all the time also working with Cawford when I had time from school. I misinterpreted and was going to do arts. I think it's important for an actress to know something besides acting. In the end I did a year of German and of drama at Queensland University until I

decided to go for broke, and just act. I've just finished playing Frances, one of the Sydney girls, in Roger Macdonald's 1915 which the ABC has made into a series. It was a great experience, lots of rehearsal and great care and enthusiasm from everyone at the ABC."

Frances is one of the principal characters. The others are Walter, Billy and Diana played respectively by Scott McGregor, Scott Burgess and Jackie Woodhouse.

"Making a film is hard, but also tremendous fun," Sigrid says, "and the atmosphere is very good and friendly. I hope it stays that way, with cast and crew getting on together. And wasn't I lucky to get Tom Barkman to work with? And Kirk Douglas? He was generous with his time and knowledge and experience. He didn't give advice. It wasn't an authoritarian atmosphere at all, just very free and friendly."

Starstruck — a triumph for all

Starstruck — what a marvellously apt title for this exuberant, fast, fresh, funny and unapologetically young using a formidable aggregation of film talent. You would have to go back to the beginning to allot the credits for *Starstruck* as was a gleam in Stephen Mackean's eye for several years, until everything came together — idea, producers David Ellick and Richard Brennan, the director Gillian Armstrong, Mark Moffatt's musical direction, half a dozen good songs, beautiful and lively cinematography under the direction of Russell Boyd, costume and production design by Luciana Arrighi, Terry Ryan and Brian Thomson, choreography by David Atkins, editing by Nicholas Brennan.

And two new young starstruck people — Jo Kennedy as Jackie and Rasi O'Donovan as Angus — and several cast-of-one, especially Margo Lee as Pearl, Pat Ewson as Nana, Max Cullen as Reg, Dennis Miller as Lou and Melissa Jaffer as Mrs Booth.

All three people occupy, more or less, a Sydney waterfront pub not taking in enough money to please the brewery from which it is leased. They are also more or less related, and stand in loco parentis to a cockroach named Wally and several confident cats. The pub and the people are models of how sorry elements may be treated in a non-sorry way.

While the elders go about their business Jackie and Angus, cousins, are an inefficient barmaid and the other a dishwasher, live in a fantasy world of their own. She wants to be a singer with a rock band, he wants to be a manager with occasional appearances on stage in a sequined dinner jacket. These modest ambitions are thwarted by injuries — where does Jackie find a band and a place to sing, how does Angus break through the elaborate bureaucracy of establishment show business?

The film is full of difficult events that look as if they occurred so easily as to be almost accidental. Jackie walks a tightrope along between two city buildings, wearing a made body-sucking and massive artificial breasts and falls into a safety net while Angus, using several of his hundred or so different voices, alerts the media, a water ballet of beach lifesavers (actually water polo players named by Dennis Barrydell) complies with one outcome on their noses (events in a hotel pool with Jackie and a troop of plumed shagies, Jackie, wearing the tulle dress her mother wore for bedroom-sleeping costumes is skinned on the machinery of the Opera House outdoor stage on New Year's Eve

before descending not too gracefully, to the pleasures of the crowd).

Interior and exterior crowd scenes are wonderfully manipulated, and David Atkins' choreography using non-dancers in one spectacular scene after another, is spellbinding. The great merit of *Starstruck* is that it has no dull patches and no over-burdened scenes, though it does have some quiet ones, and some quiet songs for Jo Kennedy as well as the firecracker numbers like "Temper, Temper", "Tough" and "Monkey In Me".

Starstruck is a triumph for all concerned in it, and should do as well overseas, with the right kind of publicity handling, as it

will surely do in Australia. As well as providing the newcomers Jo Kennedy and Rasi O'Donovan, Gillian Armstrong has brilliantly used two actresses often condemned to be stereotypes — Pat Ewson and Margo Lee. Pat Ewson has died tragically too often on our screens. This time, as Nana, the gambler about the pub, fat and loquacious, a believable grand. Margo Lee gives an exquisite performance as a jinxed cat, wearing gloves to count the money on the till so that her hands will not be soiled.

Starstruck is a Palm Beach Picture, financed from the Australian Film Commission and private sources.



Jo Kennedy (Jackie) and the Harbour View Hotel in *Starstruck*.

Man From Snowy River — excitement but not suspense

The Man from Snowy River is the third western, after *Mad Dog Morgan* and *The Frodoes*, in the local industry's boom-again period. It comes at a time when the Americans, having progressed through the simple western to the psycho western (the first of these was *The F Word That Whisked The West*, starring Robert Evans who later became a Paramount executive) and the gaudy western, such as *The Wild Bunch*, have moved into science fiction blockbusters, and that in fact may be the right time for Michael Eddley International.

It cost a lot to make, \$4 million, with an initial promotional budget of \$100,000. The producer does not have the advantage of the game press and television complex which Rupert Murdoch, a partner in R&R Associates, was able to marshal behind *Cashy* at what might work out at only a book debt. Whether valid or not, these considerations must occupy the mind of the producers, as they once occupied the minds of reviewers confronted with Cecil B de Mille's *The Ten Commandments*: "It costs big good, look what it cost" is not a statement, coming from either an editor or an advertising executive, to be dismissed lightly.

And you can see where the money has been spent. And, conversely, where it has been saved, at *manpower*. The action is marvellous — action, marvellously photographed. And I dare say Kirk Douglas, once a bundle, especially seeing he plays two roles, the cantankerous old money-bagged Harrison and the cantankerous old golden-hearted Spunk, estranged brothers, cattleman and gold prospector. The rest of the cast and most of the crew are Australian and come cheaper, although salaries and wages at all levels in Australian film making are rising, and so it would say not before time.

As everybody who has not been living in a cave without a radio must know by now, the film is based on Banjo Paterson's splendid ongoing ballad of the same name about the postbagge who broke from the horse paddock and went off with the wild horses led by the photographed stallion and was recovered by a mountain man when everybody else failed, including Clancy, played on this occasion by jolly Jack Thompson, who if he is not careful will be forever cast as a nice uncle, like Lionel



Sigrid Thornton as Jessica, could be a genuine star.

Barrymore. He badly needs a gassy character role.

The money women have been fixed up with a story by Fred Cat Collier and John Dixon which is predictable and stuffed with clichés in scenes and dialogue, and the direction of George Miller (not the Miller of *Mad Max I and II*, and it would bring confusion if one of these would change his name) does nothing to correct these faults. It is solid, suffers several failures in which nothing happens beyond meaningful glances and there are lapses of judgment — scenes early on when the stallion makes two snappy appearances proving the ad, another

early scene when Jim the hero and his father cut down a tree while gazing sentimentally at each other, Jessica the heroine perched on a rock while a storm rages over her; and worst of all, the cruel mishandling of Paterson's climax, when Jim goes over the mountain wall at the horseman's heels and is not seen effectively again until he turns up at the homestead to say "I told you so".

Along with the handsome biggie has landed up a smouldering of familiar players, including Chris Heywood (again in his role of sterner — it seems to me that casting directors don't think of him any other way) — Lorraine Bayly, Tony Bonner, Terry Donner, Gus Mancuso. They all do their best, playing stereotypes, with fairly excruciating taste.

Kirk Douglas, who obviously had troubles with makeup and costume in both his roles, is of course the star, but if anything except the horses and the glorious landscape is going for the film it is the romantic twosome of Tom Burlinson as Jim and Sigrid Thornton as Harrison's daughter Jessica, an apparently naive couple in over come out of Hollywood's silent days. It seems possible that the first women were their first, because Burlinson grows into his role, and he has real style. Sigrid Thornton is an unorthodox beauty, and when she learns to use stillness to go with genuine charm she could be a genuine star.

The film has great excitement most of the time, but not suspense. The only suspense occurs when one of the cast has to slip in a phrase from the poem, and horses, and you wonder if they are going to make it.

I was accompanied to the cinema by two boys aged 11 and eight, and their mother. The younger was preoccupied with worry



Tom Burlinson — The Man grows into his role and has real style.

about his homework but has since taken to cracking a pretzel necktie loop, and the elder said it was the best film he had seen this year. His mother and I both felt a bit muddled now.

Breakfast in Paris, RIP

I hope Rolf Mothé picked up a lot of money for making *Breakfast in Paris* (producing company John Lamond Medien, Picture: Interprima, producer John Lamond, director John Lamond, distributor Rondbouw) because it will do his reputation no good, nor indeed the reputation of the local industry. Mothé plays opposite a mature American, Barbara Parkins, who was in the celebrated television soap *Peyton Place* 20 years ago and may also be remembered for her film role in *The Valley of the Dolls*. She appears in *Breakfast* as a Melbourne dress designer taking in the Paris scene from a double bed as the Grillon. The other bed on the pillow is Rod's. He is cast as a LIP-type photographer who loves to photograph people, though by some quack in the conspiracy the only pictures printed on his walls are of the Eiffel Tower and the Saker Coeur. The film is so stupid and silly it is impossible to place the blame for its failure on any one element. John Lamond is his various roles no doubt is prepared to accept responsibility.

Mephisto — of hypnotic interest

A dramatic reversal in the storm of "Goretti" (film, that is, film not made originally in the English language, has occurred in recent months, partly due to the exit of Hermann of Channel 4/28 and partly to the conspiracy of a small, loosely connected chain of an cinema in capital cities. Other support comes from the Travelling Film Festival which has just closed a season of six films chosen from the 1981 Sydney Film Festival.

One of the most influential of the cinema-viewing foreign film (and some film from Britain and the US which would not be screened by the big commercial cinema chain) is the Denby in Sydney's up-market MLC complex in Martin Place. Last year and in the first months of 1982 the Denby has screened films from East and West Germany, Poland, Spain, Japan, El Salvador and Switzerland.

The latest is *Mephisto*, from Hungary, about events and people in Germany in the thirties during and after the rise of Adolf Hitler. It is a film of almost hypnotic interest, made by Imre Szabó and starring the assassinating, rocketing Klaus



Klaus Maria Brandauer as the actor Helge (playing Mephisto) in *Mephisto*.

Maria Brandauer from the Viennese theatre as Herich Helge, the actor who personified his own ambition by becoming the open and symbol of the new German (Aryan) drama under the patronage of the Prime Minister, who is also a general and bears a distinct resemblance to Hermann Goering — that is also a remarkable performance, from an East German actor named Rolf Hoppe.

The script is based on a novel published almost 50 years ago, written by Klaus Mann, son of the writer Thomas (Buck in *Power*, *Walden*, *The Magic Mountain*) Mann. The book scathingly disowned the truth of the relationship between Klaus Mann, Gustav (called Helge) in *Mephisto* (Klaus Mann (who married Gershwyn) had left him to his career and later married the poet W H Auden to gain British citizenship) and Paula Wodekind, daughter of the playwright.

The film stars Gershwyn-Hoppe

trying to compromise with the Nazis but also adding his Jewish colleagues and discredited, later losing into despair and becoming no more than a servant of the Prime Minister. In real life he does not seem to have paid so highly for his collaboration for his career in the German theatre continued until he died in 1945.

The film sustains wonderfully in its recreation of the moral as well as the physical atmosphere of the period and is continuously moving as the actor goes about his day his career while at the same time taking deadly risks with it.

In Melbourne the Brighton Bay Town Cinema has *Mephisto* and it is also going to Perth and Brisbane. It opened in London and New York simultaneously with the Australian showings.

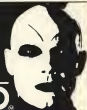
It won the International Critics Prize for Best Film and Best Screenplay at Cannes in 1981 and is nominated for Best Foreign Film at the Academy Awards.



Cannes Film Festival
International Critics Award Best Film
and Best Screenplay

Directed by ISTVÁN SZABÓ

MEPHISTO



OPERA CONFERENCE DISSOLVES

After five-and-a-half years of, sometimes turbulent, operation the Opera Conference of Australia and New Zealand decided in its meeting in Adelaide on March 15 to voluntarily dissolve its association.

This move had been foreboded as early as July last year when some of its seven member companies urged that it would be more appropriate for them to join CAPPA and join forces with other performing arts bodies then remain an exclusive opera club. The Conference and CAPPA had from the very beginning of the latter's life maintained close and friendly relations and their "amalgamation" was, in fact, only a matter of time. Victoria State Opera was the last of the companies to make the formal decision to join the wider body.

Margaret Whelan, Chairman of the Opera Conference, said after the decision had been taken that she personally

considered the action "appropriate at the time" adding that while she felt the Conference had done much valuable work, it was now of more value for all the arts to cement links through those things which they had in common rather than to be emphasising any short-term differences of style or opinion.

MILNES FOR MACBETH

American baritone Sherrill Milnes, a favourite star of the Metropolitan Opera, Covent Garden, La Scala and other major opera houses will make his Australian debut in the role only of Macbeth for the 1982 Melbourne season of the Australian Opera. Acclaimed by audiences and critics for both his musical and dramatic achievements, Sherrill Milnes is joined by famous British soprano Renée Fleming in the challenging roles of the Thane of Cawdor and his ambitious wife.

The genius of Verdi is combined with the

genius of Shakespeare and the result is a gripping theatrical explosion of wickedness, madness and death.

The production is to be conducted by Carlo Felice Catterini who also saw Donald Shanks in Baroque and Reginald Kyme in Macbeth.

VSO NEW FACES

The Chairman, Mr Jeffrey Star, QC recently announced two new appointments to the Victoria State Opera.

Mr Jack Kennedy OBE is appointed as Honorary Treasurer and Mr Wilfred Thomson is appointed as Chairman of the Victoria State Opera Foundation. The Foundation was established in 1981 to raise funds for the Opera.

Mr Kennedy is a partner of Deloitte, Haskins and Sells. He was the President of the Victorian Society for Crippled Children from 1964 to 1975, and President of Yachtclub Society in 1978. He is also a Director of the Tapestry Workshop.

Mr Wilfred Thomson has been Managing Director of Associated Fyfe and Paper Mills Limited since 1974. For the past three years he has been an executive committee member of the Sydney International Piano competition.

In announcing the appointments, Mr Star said "I am delighted to have men of such experience and stature working on behalf of the VSO. Both Mr Kennedy and Mr Thomson have a keen interest in Opera and in its development here in Victoria."

A SMALL TESTIMONIAL

General Managers and other members of the upper echelons of companies frequently receive accolades for good work done and when they move on elsewhere their passing is noted by some testimonial. All too often, however, people like production managers whose hard work and determination are at least as crucial in getting the product onto the stage, pass through publicly unacknowledged.

The (sometimes prodigious) efforts of Canberra Opera to keep the flag flying have been created by an extremely small band of staff and supporters, one of whom has recently moved on. Ellen Blunden, Canberra's Production Manager has agreed to go to a similar position with the recently announced Canberra Festival. Her contribution to the opera company there has been invaluable as all who were associated with her would recognise. This column wishes her well in her new endeavours and first says the Festival will soon show the results of her presence.



Sherrill Milnes

THE RIGHT BLEND

IAN CAMPBELL in conversation with Ken Healey



Ian Campbell (left) working with Theresa Edwards and Murray Richardson in La Bohème rehearsal.

Ian Campbell's elevation to the post of Assistant Artistic Administrator at the Met was announced in the March issue of *Theatre Australia*. His exciting prospects together with the successful season of *The Makropulos Affair* should have meant a relaxed Adelaide Festival for the General Manager of State Opera, South Australia. Instead I found him involved in an endless round of meetings with colleagues who had descended upon Adelaide for the Festival. From one of these he emerged, prompt and cheerful, for the following interview.

KH: My first memory of you is as the old

king in the AO's production of *Turandot* in the late '60s. But your involvement in opera rarely goes back beyond that company's Musical Director.

IC: Not by very much. My family left Townsville for Sydney when I was 13, and I did a BA at Sydney Uni, with the intention of completing a Law degree after that. As a gap, I auditioned for what was then the Trust Opera in 1966, and was amazed to be offered parts in the chorus. The Law studies peered out after a couple of years, by which time I was singing character roles with the company.

KH: When did you leave the AO?

IC: At the end of the first Opera House season, in April '74. Ken MacKenna-Parben, now General Manager of Victoria State Opera, was leaving his administrative job at the Music Board of the (then) Australian Council for the Arts. I was offered a temporary job there, it lasted for two years.

KH: Did your time at the Australia Council influence your career?

IC: Yes. There was vigorous contact with all the state opera companies at that time. My predecessor here, Justin Macdonnell, was ready to move on to the Sydney Con. He rang me, and I started in Adelaide as General Manager in April, 1976. Myer Friedman was the company's musical director.

KH: What have you done in Adelaide besides being chief executive of the company?

IC: Last year I directed *Bohème*, and in September this year, I'll work under my successor as a guest director on *The Tales of Hoffman*. I arrived in New York to start at the Met on October 4, working directly to Joan Lippens, who is head of the Met's artistic division.

KH: What's she once promised in London?

IC: Lippens to me is one of the goddesses of the operatic world. She used to be an artists' agent in London, then became

Artistic Administrator at Covent Garden under Sir George Solti. She was responsible for casting and repertoire there, and had decided to return when Solti went off to rejuvenate the Paris Opera with Rolf Liebermann. They persuaded her to join them, and they put Paris back on the operatic map. Just as she was thinking of retiring again, James Levine became Music Director at the Met, and lured her to New York. She came for a season or two, and so far has stayed for five years. I've since learned that the Met had been looking for about a year for someone to work with her.

KH: *What exactly does she do?*

IC: Negotiating contracts is an important part of the business side of the job. Artistically, it's a matter of helping plan the repertoire. It's a formidable task, but the meeting about the Met is that senior staff discuss all sorts of problems as a sort of think tank. Tony Bliss, the General Manager, is very good at involving people.

KH: *How did you come to get the job at the Met?*

IC: In the end, Bliss thought that I had the right blend of administrative and artistic experience. A lot of people they'd talked to had a heavy weighting one way or the other.

KH: *Yes, but how did they come to know about you?*

IC: When I left Adelaide late last year for my annual trip to the Opera America Conference, which met in San Francisco, I knew that on my return early in '82 I had to face my board on the matter of renewal. I gave the matter lots of thought, and realised while I was in San Diego giving some lectures that I should not renew. I advised a few close friends at the Opera Conference that I was interested in moving on. They included Tito Capobianco, Patrick Verch, and Michael Bronson, the Met's technical man.

KH: *I was going to ask you what part Patrick played.*

IC: Patrick acted as a broker with Bliss, who asked me what I wanted to do. When I told him that I wanted to keep working in opera, either in the US or England, he said "How would you feel about working at the Met?"

KH: *What is it simple as that?*

IC: Of course not. I had to meet Joan Ingpen, we got on well. Meeting James Levine, the Music Director, was a bit more fraught. When he asked me what I thought of his *Bohème*, I told him I

thought it was bad, and why. He agreed. That night Anthony Blizard said, "Let's celebrate your joining the Met." "But Mr Bliss, we have not discussed terms, nor precisely what the job entails!" He was reassuring: "Don't worry. No one ever rejects the Met." When I returned to Adelaide three weeks later, the contract was in my letter box.

KH: *How precisely does the job entail?*

IC: It's a frightening challenge. 6,000 roles are cast annually. Every role at the Met is cast with multiple covers, and there are 210 performances in 30 weeks, which is seven per week during the season. In the first season I'll learn how the house operates. I'll need to get involved in every corner of it. I'll also do the tour in Spring. The Met has the biggest productivity of any opera house in the world.

KH: *Isn't the tour itself something of an institution?*

IC: The singers travel by plane and the sets by truck. There are seven performances per week for eight weeks. There's nothing else like that in the world.

KH: *It all sounds a little as though this marvellous chance has dropped into your lap.*

IC: It's never quite like that. I've spent my annual holidays for the past five years going to America and England. At the Opera America Conference in '78 I first met Patrick Verch. I wanted to re-vamp the marketing for State Opera, so I asked him, "If I can get the money to bring you to Adelaide, will you give us free advice?" He arrived in Adelaide in March '79, attended our Opera Conference, saw our production of *Die Fledermaus*, and spent a week working on our marketing. The friendship developed from there.

KH: *And the Australian Opera?*

IC: They took an immediate interest in him, and brought him back twice. To give paid service, I'm glad to say. So Patrick had some experience of Australia when he applied for the General Manager's job at the AO.

KH: *How much will the changeover be here in Adelaide?*

IC: Candidates are being interviewed today. The Festival's a good time to get people here. I've planned eight operas as cost centres or units for next year. The new man will be moved to play with those as building blocks. He will select the five operas for production next year, but I will have done the

costing. As long as we have singers by mid-year, he will have time to put his stamp on the season.

KH: *In what condition are you leaving State Opera?*

IC: The new man will inherit a good company, but one with several problems. Withdrawal of Federal funding means that State governments must in future bear virtually all of the subsidy costs. The opera world as we know it now will not be possible within five years.

KH: *What do you mean by that?*

IC: In South Australia we have a stable operation because of a sympathetic state government. We even have a sympathetic opposition. But the days of large government subsidy will not come again. In the circumstances, I'm proud of the loyalty of my staff here, which will help the new General Manager when he takes over in about July.

KH: *You must have an odd feeling about leaving at such a time.*

IC: Yes. The skills of the opera manager in this country are going to be really tested in the next five years. In some ways I regret that I won't be here, because I have firm ideas about the way State Opera can survive. It will be a matter of creating new opportunities, not of running away.

KH: *Is planning one of your tasks at the Met?*

IC: What I find exciting about the Met is that it is the one company that is gearing up for the 21st century... in management structure, the way it delegates authority, the way it looks at finding problems, or arisen problems. It is most unlikely that the Met will be caught in the coming cost squeeze the way the heavily subsidised companies will be. With a turnover of \$60 million a year, it can't afford to be caught.

KH: *What are your personal thoughts as you prepare to leave?*

IC: I'm 58, and I've been involved professionally in opera since I was 21, yet I've never lived in another country. Just living in New York will be exciting, and I have yet to prove a great deal about myself professionally. I have no ambition to become General Manager of the Met. Anyway, under their present structure that would be impossible. The General Manager delegates all artistic matters to Joan Ingpen and James Levine. But that is not to say that I don't want to be a general manager again, somewhere.

Makropoulos and Elixir — strong after-images

by Ken Healey

In March, while the Australian Opera was in Brisbane with *The Bartered Bride* and *Madame Butterfly*, the so-called regional companies showed two vastly different new productions: familiar South State Opera, South Australian and Canberra Opera share the name "regional", but are otherwise unalike in most respects. What united them on this occasion was that Canberra hired Adelaide's sets and costumes for a new production by John Wilson of *The Elixir of Love*, and presented it within days of State Opera's Adelaide Festival production of Janáček's *The Makropoulos Affair*.

Featuring Swedish star Elizabeth Soderstrom, who has made the role of Elvira Marty her own, *The Makropoulos Affair* must have cost at least ten times as much as Canberra's modest *Donizetti*. Both productions were of a standard to justify their respective outlays. And there the comparison really should stop.

Eliah Moskowsky, who has been named Artistic Director of the next Adelaide Festival, returned to his native Australia from Covent Garden to produce Janáček's fascinating, but flawed piece of music theatre, which tells the story of a woman over 300 years old. Having drunk a secret potion (one is tempted to call it sorcery), but one must resist), the woman has youth, but no emotion: sex-appeal accompanied by means of a beautiful body and more than half a dozen lifetimes of practice.

If I found a little less than overacting in retelling the story, it may be because this piece of melodrama, adapted from a play which its author, Carl Capak, rightly avoided with courtesy of Janáček, is better suited to the talents of, let us say, *Melotte*, than to the man who wrote *Tosca* and *Kayser Kohlenstein*. At least *Melotte*, a highly competent librettist, would have made a better adaptation. The first act is viewed by someone narrative to the exclusion of much dramatic context. High emotion is generated in Act 2 when, reunited with her Elvira Marty has sung the role of Aida, she is confronted by a number of lovers, past, present, and would-be. Unfortunately, in the face of her own imminent death in Act 3, Marty is unable to revert to narrative and when the opera calls for a veritable waltz of emotions.

It is indeed high praise to say that despite



Gregory Demphy, Roger Howell and Elizabeth Soderstrom in Act 2 of SOA's *The Makropoulos Affair*. Photo Jan Dalman.

the opera's inherent flaws, the production had dignity, harmoniousness, a good deal of fine sound, and the mystery of Soderstrom who manages to project at once the allure of a desirable woman and the ambivalence of a prima donna. She has been at the peak of her profession for 30 years.

As though hampered by the impenetrable libretto, Janáček did not waste his most lyrical vocal lines for the opera. Yet the archaized texture in brass and woodwind is often bold and complex. The Adelaide Symphony Orchestra under Denis Vaughan lacked rhythmic tension at times, and was guilty of sloppy entries far too often. Was the balance between pit and stage, unsatisfactory by all accounts at earlier performances, was re-established for the instance which I attended. In an audible but unaging English, Thomas Edmonds and Roger Howell, both in major roles, deserve special praise for clarity of word and tone.

Sharing the pleasures with Soderstrom and with Moskowsky's intelligent production was Brian Thomson's imposing design, predominantly in black. Its tones, set inside giant arches, actually made the concert hall at the Festival Centre look like a true theatre, they blended with the understatement with so subtly the false presence of arches compromised the spirit of the setting. On stage, who will forget the bold towers backed by Marty's giant portrait, or the huge Sphinx cying

acrobatically the unknown faces of the women who had just been its Aids?

Apart from Soderstrom, the most impressive performance came from James Christensen as Pava, the man who forces the truth from Marty after a night of love. Only Gregory Demphy, insufficiently beautiful of voice, features, and figure to succeed as Albert Grigon, was not without. There is not a trace in the country who would be ideal both mentally and physically for the role, but Thomas Edmonds may have come a good deal nearer.

The scale of the enterprise was suitably corrected for Canberra's thoroughly professional re-working of the role of Aida. Nobody buying love potion from a quick-witted Sweet-and-Sour so that he could beat his rival, Sergeant Beautiful Heart. Canberra Opera sang Donizetti's sparkling comedy in English, but wisely left the names (*Nemorosino*, *Dulcamara*, and *Belcore*) in the original Italian. Come to think of it, the translation did have early trouble when the chorus sang of an *elixer*. As it turned out they had to rhyme it with "miser"; the abbreviation came with the need for the waltz rhyme.

Just as Brian Thomson's design casts the strongest after-image from Adelaide, so the beautiful sound of Glenn Winkler's lyric tones remains in the mind's ear after Canberra. Still at the beginning of his career, Winkler never forces his angle

tone, indeed, one could have wished for a more role with more high notes to show him off. In fact, the most impressive bit note of the night came from this splendid high baritone John Wood, cutting a dashing figure in the bass role of Desdemona. The heavy tolling of a true bass voice was missed, but not every bass can act like John Wood. The production, set in 1903, has him enter in an electric car.

Glen Slater's equally fine lyric baritone sounded a trifle dry on opening night. Producer Mahon had him caricature the role of Belovet a little more than necessary. Given such strong casting, surely the sergeant needs only to enlarge his knowledge of the beauty of his face and his voice. In most other respects the production was winning with welcome touches, perhaps a few too many. I could have done without the comic doll of the soldiers while they sang. Fran Brady's Adina was predictably impressive as a piece of acting. Her duet with the large chorus Neighbours of Glen Winslade immediately after "Una Parata Leggera" was most touching, delicate with singing enveloped a sensitive realisation. At the very peak of her vocal form, Fran Brady may have matched Winslade, but she managed only a good promotional tone, showing insecurity of pitch when the visit was under pressure.

The chorus was underpowered in the tuning acoustic of the Canberra Theatre, neither did it nor the orchestra provide the rhythmic base that the score so often demands. For instance, the choir's staccato passages accompanying Desdemona's entry were slack. Stage and pit were not always at one, which led me to believe that young conductor Andrew Greene had been given insufficient preparation with his old hoc forces. He needs more musical authority if he is to repeat with Canberra's scratch team the finely wrought sounds he has achieved in Melbourne with Victoria's State Opera.

On the positive side, it was good to hear so many of the usual acts in the new opened up. Passages that used to sound repetitive when Donmen's conductors were first heard now sound a variety in their variation from what had preceded them.

Hugh Coleman's Edwardian costumes were fine, and his temple set, making use of the effects of varying light against a slanted background, helped one to forget in some the austerity of the budget.

Ironically, Canberra Opera, which has not received a sustaining grant from the Australia Council's Music Board, will be least affected by the total repudiation of the subsidies for state opera companies. Yet one blanches at the thought of compromises in the quality of presentations from the leading state companies in Adelaide and



Fran Brady, Glen Winslade and John Wood in Canberra Opera's *Elixir of Love*

Melbourne. The extraordinary achievement represented by *La Malinconia Affair* at this year's Adelaide Festival, and by *Donk Is Your* two years earlier could not

have come without a comparably high level of activity month in and month out. And that requires government subsidy, both Federal and state.

OPERA -GUIDE

ACT

CANBERRA OPERA

Canberra Theatre (4976003). Peter Gross as Benjamin Britten conductor, Donald Holler, producer, John Tasker, designer, Fiona Parry, with Robert Good, Anne Graham-Smith, Neil Easton, Graeme McFarlane, Margaret Sam. May 28, 29.

VIC

THE AUSTRALIAN OPERA

Princes Theatre (8623911). *Madama Butterfly* by Puccini (in Italian), conductor, William Reid, producer, John Cooley, designers, Henry Bardon (sets) and Michael Stennett (costumes), with Rhonda Bruce or Lynne Canton, Kathleen Moore, Anson Austin or Lamberto Furlan, Gregory Yarnish or Raymond Myers. May 1, 4, 5, 14, 15. *La Bohème* by Puccini (in Italian), conductors, Carlo Felice Cilliano and William Reid, producer, Andrew Sinclair, designer, Tom Lingwood with Lorraine Nawa Jones or Glenys Fowler, Jennifer McGregor or Rhonda Bruce, Richard Greager or Anson Austin. May 3, 6, 8. *Puccini's Trilza*, conductor, Carlo Felice Cilliano, producer, MaHat Oairibould, designer, Desmond

Digby. 7 Nabarro, with Stela Pina, John Sydney, John Shaw. *Sister Angelica*, with Mary Landa, Laura Elms, Gianni Scocchi, with Angela Denning, Anne Marie McDonald, Jennifer Birmingham, Judith Saliba, Rosina Rastbeck, Paul Farris, Graeme Ewen, Ronald MacDonagh, Robert Eddie, Alan Light, Donald Solomon. May 13, 15, 19, 21, 24, 26.

VICTORIA STATE OPERA

Madama Butterfly by Puccini (in English), conductor, Andrew Greene, producer, Peter Jordan, designer, Hugh Coleman, with Beverly Bergen, Suzanne Johnston, Peter Anderson, Ron Lees, Ian Cousins, Christopher Davies. Touring country areas. Traralgon, May 7, 8. Hontham, May 13. Hamilton, May 15. Mildura, May 21, 11. Bairdside, May 29.

WA

WA OPERA COMPANY

His Majesty's Theatre (32 16288). *Rigoletto* by Verdi, musical director, Gerald Krug, producer, Michael Beauchamp, choreographer, Lady Hume, with John Wood, Anthony Bendall, Geoffrey Hains, Merlys Quarel, Judith Henley and the WA Arts Orchestra. To May 13.

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AB REVIEW

Far-reaching changes to the running of the Australian Ballet have been recommended in the management's consultation review commissioned by the company's board of directors.

In 51 pages of recommendations and observations form a blueprint for the company's future — an optimistic one if a high level of communication between management and performers can be achieved and maintained.

The main thrust of the review is the reinstatement of the artistic management in the company's prime motivator. "We have no doubt that, in a ballet company, the position of artistic director should have preeminent focus. It is the position from which the company's artistic inspiration, vision and drive is drawn."



Peter Balton — Report recommends narrowing the administrator's power base.

To make this change is more than theoretical waffle, a strengthening and clarifying of the artistic staff is suggested. New positions of ballet director, artistic/production and resident choreographer, and three positions of ballet master/mistress, are seen to be necessary. They would take some of the day-to-day pressures off the artistic director — as would another new appointment, personnel manager — and provide the opportunity to test artistic proposals.

The review does not address staff specifically in the position of Peter Balton, the Australian Ballet Administrator, whose sacking was called for by the dancers when they were on strike last year. But its recommendations include changes that would narrow the power base of the

company's administrator considerably from that which Mr Balton has enjoyed for nearly a decade.

A chart showing the recommended organisation structure not only divides the responsibility of artistic and administrative staff, but indicates separate reporting lines for the artistic director and the administrator, each of them going direct to the board through an executive committee. Currently, the administrator has full responsibility for the company's operations.

Another recommendation is that the position of company secretary should not be held by the chief executive of the company, as it is presently by Mr Balton. Stating that it was not illegal for the two positions to be held by one person, nor that any criticism was implied of the current appointment in that dual role, preference was given for the two positions to be divided. "The company secretary is the chief administrative officer of a company, and reports to the board. He must act, if need be, independently of the chief executive officer to protect the board in the discharge of its statutory obligations."

The tone of the report is positive. Criticism of the recent past is made more by implication than in so many words. The strongest statement appears to be: "We must emphasise that improvements are overdue and changes are necessary." Beyond that, the sheer number of recommended changes speaks for themselves.

Patience and commitment from dancers, management and board are asked for. "We are convinced that, unless there is an early renewal of team effort and a return to the realisation that the Australian Ballet's standards are not achievable by one group alone, no real improvement is in sight."

Members of the board, who have been under a good deal of public criticism, were not given harsh judgement by the report. Some discussion is given to the need for clarification of the role of the board and the aim for future membership. These include the need for people who have "an interest in and commitment to the industry they are directing... (and) wide experience in the arts or theatre or business", providing a spread of age groups, geographic locations and ethnic backgrounds. Dancer representation on the board was achieved as a result of last year's strike.

Other recommendations include the provision of one person as artistic director — important in light of appointing nominees that two might share the creative job, meetings once a month or more between dancers, administrative artistic staff, constant reviews of the required number of

performers, and the possibility of committees being set up within the board structure.

At the time of writing, the review was being discussed by the AB board, management and staff. But its effects were already being noticed. Members of the press were consulted with the review on its release (more readily than members of the company, which was unfortunate), and dance reviewers were flown in by the company from around the country to comment on the program of new works which opened the company's 1982 Sydney subscription season. The pointed program for that season the administrator's introduction, a controversial item for a long while, and carried pages of information about the artistic role of the company's operations.

Whether the changes are merely cosmetic remains to be seen.

BRIEFLY...

Talented young Tamas Bocor, just turned 17, is taking up his \$4,000 Peter Soreyevicz Scholarship at the Royal Ballet School in London on the advice of his teachers, Jean and Monica Haldley, of Sydney.

Melbourne in Melbourne, 17-year-old Josephine Sensablers elected to use her \$4,000 Royal Academy of Dancing scholarship to continue her studies at the Victorian College of the Arts, where the School of Dance is run by Anne Woodlums. Permission to do this was given by the RAD after meeting the college's standards, on the part, winners of its student scholarship have had to take up studies in London.

Danilo Radovic and Chrus Konarski, former Australian Ballet members, now doing outstandingly well with Antierion Ballet Theatre, made a flying trip home in March to see their families in Melbourne and Sydney on the fortnightly break following an ART tour that concluded in Los Angeles. Let's hope we have them back to dance some time.

The Australian Dance Theatre is taking nine works overseas for a season at London's Sadlers Wells Theatre between June 15 and 28, followed by performances at festivals in Cologne, Athens and Dubrovnik.

Peter Brunsen, dance writer and evaluator, will leave his post as Director of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation's UK branch in October after more than a decade. He will become principal lecturer in the sociology of dance, and head of the Department of Research and Community Development at the Laban Centre for Movement and Dance in South London.

CHOREOGRAPHY — A DOG'S LIFE?

GLEN TETLEY
talks to Jill Sykes

Glen Tetley, the choreographer, doesn't forget the advice that Sir Frederick Ashton once gave him: "Well, my dear, there is an old saying that you can't be both whore and madame."

The allusion was to all the years that Tetley spent trying to perform and choreograph, and then, between 1974 and 1976, combining choreography with directing the Stuttgart Ballet. "It is all I can handle just to try to be a good choreographer," he said cheerfully in Sydney recently.

He has every reason to be cheerful as he continues to be in demand around the world, both to create new works and revive old ones. He was back in Australia after nearly a decade to put the finishing touches to Boström-Curry's staging of his *Rite of Spring* for the Australian Ballet. It was one of the works which opened the company's 1982 subscription season in Sydney, and will be seen later this year in Brisbane and Melbourne.

Tetley has not long completed a new *Firshard* for the Royal Danish Ballet, which also has his *Polovtsians*, *Greeting* and *Rite of Spring* in its repertoire. His *Dances of Alhambra* for the Royal Ballet made him the first non-British recipient of the Elizabeth II Coronation Award. *The Tempest*, which he choreographed in 1978, will open the Scandinavian ballet season in New York next October. When he left Australia, it was to stage *Polovtsians* for the Paris Opera Ballet.

His *Rite of Spring*, which he choreographed in the mid-seventies, doesn't follow the tradition began by Nijinsky of offering a female sacrifice. His *Chosen One* is a muscular male,



Joanne Whitchel, Paul de Mazzon, Marilyn Rowe Meyer and Zane Wilson in the Australian Ballet's Rite of Spring.

and the work's mingling of mythic and religious symbolism has the sophisticated academic taste that followers of Tetley's work have come to expect.

"I am not interested in seeing a virgin dancing herself to death," he said. "I wanted my *Virgo* to be a dance of regeneration. In the original Russian, the reference is only to the Chosen One. It doesn't specify a female virgin."

"I have always been interested in comparative religion and archaeology, and in so many of the primitive religions — one could even include Christianity — the god of spring, the sacrifice, is male. Sometimes it is combined: the male takes on a female identity, as in Aztec rites."

Another of his inspirations for this work came from the T S Eliot poem, *Gerontion*. He quoted from it: "In the juvenescence of the year came Christ the tiger. 'I thought Wow! That's a lot of of images coming together there.'"

Tetley is one of those rare choreographers who like to bring more than visual and dramatic content to their work. Having been lucky enough to be dance reviewing in London as he helped chart the Ballet Rambert through its new growth phase in the late sixties, I soon learned to look deeper than the action for the possibilities of meaning behind it. Peter Brown and Clement Crisp describe that potential perfectly in the *Pan Book of Ballet and Dance*:

"In many Tetley works we have been aware of the layers of meaning which invest his choreography, symbols, relationships, which provide an undercurrent of correspondences that we can accept or reject as we choose, but which are self-generating from Tetley's own wide-ranging sensitivities."

The breadth of Tetley's stylistic and thematic range may have something to do with the fact that he was 20 and a medical student before he decided to train as a dancer. "I came in late and thought, 'I am going to get the best of everything I can grab'," he recalled in Sydney. And he certainly chose some outstanding teachers. Antony Tudor and Margaret Crank instructed him in classical technique, while Martha Graham and Hanya Holm inspired him with the possibilities of modern dance. "The biggest push to me creatively came from my classes with Hanya."

Because he did a lot of work with the Martha Graham Company, some people pigeon-holed him into modern



Glen Tetley.

dance. But he also appeared as a principal dancer for American Ballet Theatre, partnering such famous dancers as Maria Tallchief, Lope Serrano and Teri Lander.

The confusion about his background may have arisen because his early choreography indicated such an individual selection of movement influences, and for a long time, he didn't devise any point work for his dancers.

"I think the movement sources I was feeling were in a more contemporary direction," he said. "When you work with any dancer, you have to get inside their bodies to feel how they are going to move, and I didn't want to use the classical vocabulary until it came naturally. As I began to be asked to choreograph for classical companies, I grew to feel more experienced and

confident about working in that style. I lost the added stretch to have that point given. That is a very special thing that it does."

"At first I thought, 'I am only going to use point if an audience doesn't realize the dancer is on point.' It started gradually. Then, when I took over Stuttgart and worked with Marcus Heyder, whose best line is on point, I used it more often. I felt I was developing a contemporary classical style — to me it's the one language."

Gerontion, which Tetley created for the Australian Ballet in 1973, was one of the earliest works in which he put his female dancers on point. He has a great affection for that great ballet, and feels that it still belongs to Australia and its national company, despite the performances of its given overseas by such outstanding companies as Stuttgart and American Ballet Theatre since then.

During our conversation, I couldn't resist asking after Tetley's well-known dachshund, Franello and Turtulo, who became almost as well-known in the dance world as their master. Also, they died at a canine old age which only humans in undisturbed villages at dizzy altitudes manage to achieve.

Tetley has a rich and affectionate collection of stories about them and their commuting lives between his homes in New York and Italy. He and a friend would travel separately in economy and first class, each with the one dog allowed in that section of the cabin on the flight.

For example, there was the time an air hostess approached him and asked if he knew the gentleman travelling in economy with the same kind of dog that he had. "I wonder if you could wake him up because his dog is on the pilot's lap." Turtulo had apparently discovered the best observation point on the plane and taken up the same stance as he would at a car, surveying the Atlantic.

All of this may seem to have nothing to do with dance — except that in the process of recounting a few anecdotes, Tetley mentioned that he had learned so much about movement from his dogs. Franello, he said, inspired his choreography for the calculating, worldly-wise Brighella in one of his earliest and most memorable works, *Paros Lucare*. Now you don't get information like that in scholarly reference books.



Pina Bausch, ADT and SDC

by Bill Shearbridge

For my money, the Wuppertal Dance Theatre was the highlight of the 1982 Adelaide Festival, and for many others too, judging by opinion canvassed. So that is it says, they threw quite a few people for a loop, the balletomanes as well as the "tough" dance crowd.

They were serious, especially the drama critics, as they attempted to grapple with the work's logistics, blanching about the length, slowness and repetitiveness, especially in *Kontakhof*. Mind you, sitting in a theatre something akin to a combustion stove, one could sympathise.

But if one could take the time to think out the reason *dance* of the Wuppertal company, all of the "blanks" could be seen to be of deliberate design. For all its adventurous enquiry into dance and theatre, it is one of the most disciplined of groups, with its works scaled and bevelled into strict formalistic structures.

In *Kontakhof*, it was Pina Bausch's intention to make the audience out of the scheme of a "theatre" presentation and the otherwise that in two ways.

Firstly by placing the performance in a setting conducive and "real" to the terms of the work. *Kontakhof* is initially about the male and masculine interest in a public meeting place, in this case a dance hall, and that is why the work went on at the Thorburn Town Hall, an entrance dance hall.

Secondly she wants to break down the

"bars and up" barriers inherent in a production. To start with, audiences, once criticised as they are, tend to see things "big", thereby misunderstanding life and all that.

What she wanted to do was scale down the audience's field and depth of vision, lower the slowness and the repetition. There were times when one could say to oneself, "if they do that gesture once more I'll scream". One searched silently for a change and when that (small) change came one's attention was riveted on it. It was a gesture that normally one could see anywhere, but, put into this sort of time-struck, it became a revelation.

Having achieved this microscope-like field of vision Pina Bausch could continue — and she did — the gestures of love that turn to gestures of domination, fear, new combinations, rejection and longing. Things were repeated was enough, the men fighting for the women, the dancers striding in line across the stage, the girl who begged money from the audience to buy a ride on the mechanical horse, and so on. The point was, so much to make the audience appreciate what was going on around the repetition, as to make it aware of the formalistic device, in fact some aspects of *Kontakhof* are as formal as a classical divertimento.

With all this, the time came when one was no longer seeing the company as performers, but in part of a dance crowd, a very observant part. One could see that the "corps" sections of men and women hailing against each other, snapping out "head, shoulder, knee, leg" was not so much a stylised dance step as a domination game.

And so it went on until, with the film excerpt of disks on an artificial lake the point was fully made that in nature there are no moral distinctions, and care, love and

protection are instinctive, without the rules and barriers that humanity puts up.

But humanity cannot go back to this primordial by virtue of its social complexity, and so the struggle goes on. The dancers at the end of the work still carry on as they did before, pushing their toes tight, stomps, strengthening the heels of a run, shaking the hair back, examining the fingertips etc, only now we are aware of why. Awareness has been achieved because of those longitudes and repetitions, not in spite of them.

The earlier work, *Bluebird*, didn't set itself the task of dismantling social conventions, it dealt almost historically with the abyss of incomprehension between seeing life as a woman and seeing it as a man.

It is not enough to be pragmatic and make "social conditioning" as the reason, for if *Bluebird* proves anything, it proves that the absolute condition of a changed "social conditioning" is impossible for the reasons that *Kontakhof*, at greater length, identifies.

The drama and brutality of *Bluebird* comes out of personal expectations as much as anything, that and human frustration. The line of men slowly dragging themselves across the last screen door are as heavily weighed and pressured as the women. The tight (muscular) bodies and the athletic runs and jumps across the stage are as much engendered by the women as the men.

As the "bulls" close and *Bluebird* drops his hands along the floor with him and out of the door he repeatedly claps his hands and the rest of the cast maintains by those two gestures of domination/subservience, rejection and acceptance. It again has gone full circle and the audience feels that the full circle will always continue.

It has been noted that Pina Bausch and her company in the years that it has been performing in its homeland has done more to develop the face of dance and theatre in that country than all the other German choreographers put together. Let's hope that other dance groups (including the One Extra Dance Company which has been doing something similar in kind if not in manner, for years) here in Australia could do something likewise to increase the appreciation of Australian audiences and critics as the Wuppertal company has done in its short Australian visit.

It was a wonderful and exhilarating experience to see it, but all the same, I would not like to lose Wuppertal. Apart from anything else, I'd hate to have this sort of thing as a constant date, especially since the Wuppertal company tends to perform with a rather disapproachable knowledge of time.

It was therefore welcome to be able to see



Kontakhof. Photo: G.H. Weiss.

"dancing" going on at the Festival, in the guise of the Australian Dance Theatre's performance of *While We Watched*, Jonathan Taylor's latest full-length work.

One thing is certain, Taylor is a man of the theatre, he crosses his aspects, his dimensions and his dimensions for all the theatrical effect that can be drawn from them. *While We Watched* is a work of pure dance without any overt "dramatic" or narrative tacking, but with a covert sense of drama always pervading it. It is a ballet based on that great standby of the theatre, tension and conflict.

Never have I seen the ADT dancers so powerfully extended and theatrically exposed, but exposed by virtue of the expressiveness of their dancing and the "canniness" of what they are given to dance.

While We Watched is in some ways an extension on Taylor's previous *Transfigured Night*. Ray Cook's children of questions that rise up in his by orchestral score is a fine backdrop to the sweeping lifts, edgy partnering, bounding movements and soaring solos that pepper this ballet.

However, while it is perfect in its place, giving that is one sense of purpose, it does not the last movement of *Barry's Mordred*, it wears itself out dramatically and inevitably for the same reasons that Taylor's choreography wears itself out.

The contrast are always too big.

While there are some finely crafted ensemble in the work, especially in Part 1, it relies too much at times on the dramatic impact inherent in extreme dynamics. Small, complex pas de deux and solos between or lyrical by turns are repeatedly swept up and away by great bounding, group pieces that have the sweep and grandeur of waves from the sea. These group movements are, more often than not, used merely to "wong" the aforementioned solo or duet from the stage.

It gives an exhilaration to start with, but after a while, these sweeps become wearisome. By at least they would if it weren't for the serene, calm and stately finish to the ballet, with the dancers in a circle, peeling off into the (exposed) wings while the couple white silk hangings disappear into the flies to reveal a bare stage, all set to a peaceful Russian Orthodox chant.

ADT has always been an ensemble company to me, more so than the SDC, and it was good to see the occasional spotlight given to certain single dancers within the company, especially the two boys in the male pas de deux in Part 1 and the couple in Part 2 on the lovely extended pas de deux (what I would call the Kapellman Waltz). I would like to see more of that underlying in ADT works and a little less frolicsome from the company as a whole.

Space precludes a long analysis of the SDC's new *Addendum 2*, which is a pity because it has in Barry Merceid's *Mordred*.



John Noble and Madonna Paterson in ADT's *While We Watched*. Photo: Grant Hancock.

a lovely neoclassical ballet of craftsmanlike construction and in Murphy's *How a vibrant, powerful piece of theatre*. In Graham Watson's *Leslie*, though, a ballet "about" a robot rebelling against her controllers and trying to have good time, I'm not sure what it has, but it isn't very interesting. Perhaps Mr Watson has been choreographing too many commercials, because it has in Barry Merceid's.

Barry Merceid, on the other hand, has remained in his genre country of black and lightly flavoured abstract dance and it is a welcome name after the heavy stuff of the Adelaide Festival. To call it craftsmanlike is to give it high praise. Merceid leads the interest through a close-packed weave of ensemble and pas de deux work and he has, like Balanchine, demonstrated his music by virtue of the clarity of his design. It is a work however that will need repeated viewings to reveal its depth.

I don't think however I could hear too

many viewings of Murphy's *How*. While there is a hard, grinding edge to his choreography, it is at times too much, repetitive and over-representational. Murphy stuff we've seen before. He has also fallen into the same trap that a lot of choreographers fall into when trying to create a strong physical emotion on stage, they create it literally instead of trying to illuminate it in an allegoric way.

Then as a ballet about hate we have lots of frantic running about, sharp jutting angles in the chest wads and a mixture of flailing arms and legs, finishing with point being thrown at the audience (stopped only by the clear plastic curtains). Trouble is it looks a little empty and arty, reminiscent at times of the bad days of the Ballet Russe when they tried to bring in outside talent (Picasso, Braque, Satie) to create in design and sound what was lacking in choreographic invention.

Be that as it may, there is plenty of good stuff to salvage from this work and when one considers the masterpiece of New Additions 1, *Mordred*, Graham Murphy has served his company, dancers and audience extremely well this time around.

The Australian Ballet's opening programs for 1982 at the Sydney Opera House will be presented in the next issue.

WA Ballet at the Maj

by Miranda Sadka

Still, seasons and seasons are the ingredients that made up the WA Ballet Company's first 1982 season at His Majesty's Theatre in Perth.

It was a sophisticated evening of dance that ranged from the complex motifs of



WA Ballet in *Images*. Photo: Sally McConnell.

Garth Welch's *Angels* is the congested noncommence of his one-act *Ravensdale*, but despite that imaginative offering, Perth audiences stayed away in droves.

His ballet in Perth reached the stage where it is seen only as neo-Christian pornography-style entertainment? The success of past productions of the ilk of *Four Pies* and *Cinderella* would lead one to this unhappy conclusion.

Yet from the viewpoint of sheer artistic merit, the recent season deserved support. It showed the company is one of professional standing on the national scene. Judged wisely, made the most of the differing moods of each of the five one-act ballets presented.

Barry Moreland's *Spirals*, which opened the program, is a work of great lyric beauty demanding control and precision dancing from the performers. Choreographed for the company, a minor advantage of the dancers' powerful blend of strength and grace.

A touch of surreal mysticism came with Walker Boswell's *Pinocchio* fables, a whimsical ballet set to Ravi Shankar's score. Janet Munday captured the quicksilver lightness of the bird of paradise, although some of her properties needed greater definition, and Stephen Rowe supported her strongly in the earthbound hunter.

The third ballet, Rita Pavelli's *One to Five*

is a whimsical piece of innocent mischief set to Strauss. Four male chorists set the situation of their respective female colleagues and beguile the audience with their antics. Although the mood is light-hearted and allows the dancers to indulge in a certain amount of drollery, the ballet is technically demanding and the footwork of the male dancers was at times set up to scotch.

The fourth curtain opened to a hypnosis, contemporary ballet by the company's Artistic Director, Garth Welch *Angels* is a compelling piece of choreography which explores the moods and rhythms of the Bachmanns' mood as its strange angular patterns melt into sinuous movement. Some outstanding solo and pas de deux work came from Michele Ryan who combined a rock hard technique with an almost boundless flexibility of the torso and upper limbs. Tony Tamborn was an excellent foil with the clean lines of his dancing and fine port de bras.

The evening's finale came with Mr Welch's one-act version of the Russian dance, *Ravensdale*. In its original three-act format, the ballet is an unashamedly allegorical harpale on the two nineteenth century madmen. Mr Welch has eliminated much of the usual padding of previsions, down to sequences and the like, to give a well-integrated series of solo and ensemble sequences that move smoothly to the

happy-ever-after conclusion.

However, along with the unrolled rappings, a hint of the magic but dishevelled Despair William Dwyer's outrageous manner in their rich satirical content, the wife Mr Maguire's stage looks have without the heads of courtesans and roving pointers that normally veil the ranks of such a ballet. Such defects can only be overcome by a big company with a strong corps of dancers on which to call and the WA company managed to give a striking performance with the slender cast at its command.

Maggie Lorrance was a delicate and rare-facted Raynolds, the fragile fragility of her performance contrasting with the studied movements of the courtesans and the leashed passion of the Saracen courtesan. She was strongly partnered by Timothy Storey as the medieval knight who returns from the Crusades to claim her as his bride.

For those who were bored to Mr Maguire's during the season, it was a challenging and satisfying evening of dance, but the dancers' awkward figures do not sing well for the future of ballet in this state.

Unless Perth audiences realize that dance is more than tuxes and toe-shoes and stiletto side glances, we will be reduced to amateur productions that lack either the courage or the imagination to venture outside the boundaries of revivals.



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all the soap opera content of some of the exchanges there were still enough moments to persuade me that a slightly bolder (but unseasonable) dramatic treatment might pay dividends.

Much of the play's success was attributable to the performances, with Dennis Olsen managing to combine comic energy and somber reflectiveness in his characterisation while also suggesting Gump's uttermost numbness without turning it into a mid-century interpretation of bohemian coherence. Contrary to what one might think, playing a character constantly on the move and full of swirling confusion, can often be more satisfying for the audience than the performer. This was never the case in Olsen's confident yet never indulgent performance. (However, fine point: that he is, he tends to take some of his sales too far for comfort: very few comic phrases can play Gump's apparently straight-talking word pieces at the speed he took them).

Daphne Garry's Rose was equally convincing, though more hampered by the writing's occasional lapses into triviality. Yet she too retained the temporary to play up the part and, especially in her later scenes, convincingly caught the public dignity of Rose at the end of her life — for all her lapses into hysteria and mania. Debbie Lisle and Patrick Frost were the other members of a strong quartet: the former confident and in particular promising Gump's first fiancée, Margot, with due attention to her attractiveness, sensitivity and ultimate confusion over what Gump's exposed of her. The Adelaide theatre scene will be much the poorer for her absence as, over the past two years, she has offered some novel performances.

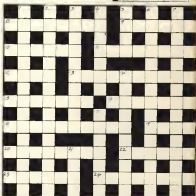
John Noble's direction was precise, allowing the characters room for development while keeping a brisk pace. The set however, seemed over-elaborate: a few props and changes in lighting would have been both more effective and less comfortably domestic.

Name.....

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Last month's winner was S. Rugham, Nelson's Bay NSW. The first correct entry to be drawn on May 31 will win a free subscription to *T4*.



ACROSS

1. Regular contributor to the word (4,4)
5. You are entitled far of the throat, we hear (4)
10. Wrapped round model plied with alcohol (6)
11. Categorized boy hanging around the beauty (5)
12. Leave out point of rigid argument (4)
13. Trick church with nothing laid out in shape (10)
15. Type of book writer noted for classy at home (7)
16. Maybe three villains won't have each (3,4)
18. Dagger to go in with damaged tool (10)
19. Take nothing from egg-shaped post (4)
20. It appears the worker could me without objection (5)
22. Dance to question me with two grand. What? (6)

23. Upright because you are involved in working, apparently (6)
24. German noblemen choose alternatives (6)
- DOWN
1. Commuter writer meets railroad in "The Enigma" (3,5,3,4)
2. There's a change — training's at four (15)
3. Prophesy before the Word? (10)
4. Payment to Heather out of sentiment (7)
5. Separating measure from weight makes one speckles (4)
6. Investment woman constructing high life (8,7)
7. Commonly I lodge and marry Emma, a lady of letters (4,4,3)
14. Eruptions brought on by temperature and light combination remains (4,4)
15. Talk talk about willows (7)
21. Four model leaves the de (4)

A Map of the World by David Hare. Sydney Theatre Company. Adelaide Festival. Opened March 4, 1982.
Director, David Hare; Designer, Emma McQuibbin; Music, Mark Hare; Stage Manager, John Ware.
Cast: Nathan Satt, Robert Grady, Penny Dennis, Nicole Scott-Williams, Peter Whitford, Tim Robertson, Denise Birkett, Hugo Weaving, Michael O'Hall, Alan Fletcher, Andrew Ross, Kenneth Ayres, Dan Marshall, Bill Buchanan, David Gynn, Peter Smith, Nicholas Lethbridge. (Professional)

Prey and Bone by Bob George. Sage Company. Adelaide Festival. Opened March 10, 1982.
Director, John Noble; Designer, Bruce McKinstry; Cast: Dennis Olsen, Daphne Garry, Debbie Lisle, Patrick Frost. (Professional)